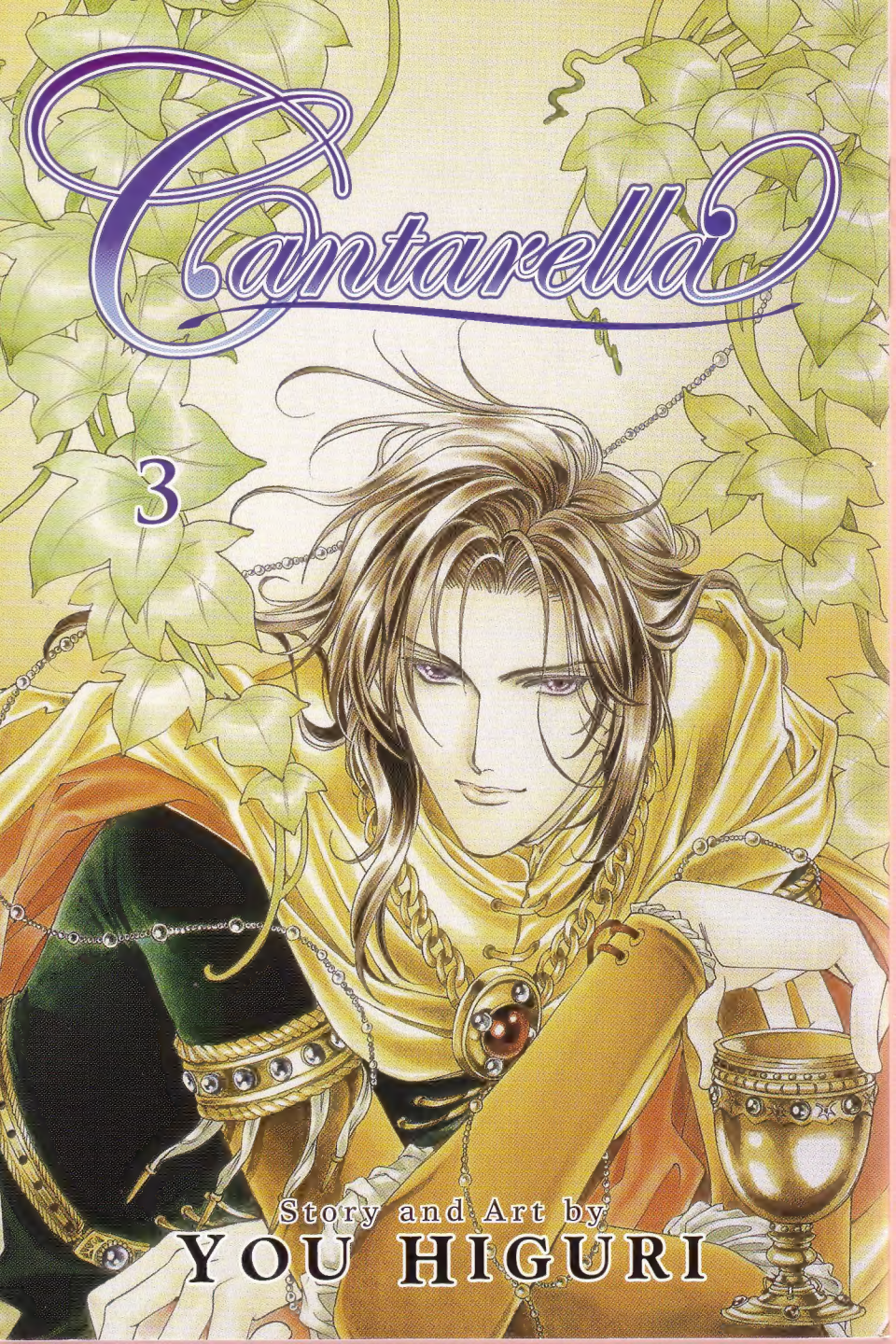
KEIZOKU-SCANS
...and the manga goes on
DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES SHARE OUTSIDE OF IRC!


Cantarella
3
Story and Art by
YOU HIGURI

YOU HIGURI
3
ナンバカ

Cantarella

STORY AND ART BY

YOU HIGURI

VOLUME 3

go!comi

Translation – Chrissy Schilling
Adaptation – Audry Taylor
Production Assistant – Mallory Reaves
Lettering & Design– Fawn Lau
Production Manager – James Dashiell
Editor – Jake Forbes

A Go! Comi manga

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e-mail: info@gocomi.com

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Cantarella 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CANTARELLA .....PAGE 5
POSTSCRIPT .....PAGE 186

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GOLD September issue (2001)
GOLD October Special issue (2001)
GOLD November & December issues (2001)
GOLD January issue (2002)

OUR STORY SO FAR AND INTRODUCTION OF CHARACTERS

Enter the forsaken Cesare Borgia, whose soul was sold to the devil by his father, Cardinal Rodrigo, in exchange for the Papal throne. In the throes of hopelessness, he tried to kill himself rather than face the inner darkness of his soul. Even this relief was not granted him, as he was saved by his own enemy, the assassin Michelotto, whose pity eased Cesare's pain. Rodrigo took on the robes of the papacy and named himself Pope Alexander VI. Granting his son the position of Cardinal, Alexander hoped to quietly quell Cesare's greater ambitions. But Cesare now lives only for his ambitions, and with the assassin at his side, he plots a future both magnificent and terrifying in its scope, even as the threat of invasion gathers around Italy...

CESARE BORGIA

The hero of our story. His father sold the boy's soul to the devil in exchange for religious power. Now a Cardinal, Cesare will wear the sacred scarlet robe even when his eyes glow golden with wicked intent.

JUAN BORGIA

Unlike his older brother, Juan is favored by his father. A position has been secured for him in the Spanish court, though lately he's spent all his time in Rome with the mysterious foreigner, Prince Djem.

LUCREZIA BORGIA

A sweet girl who adores her older brother Cesare. She was forced to wed the Lord of Pasaro in an arranged marriage.

POPE ALEXANDER VI

An ambitious man who sold his own son's soul in exchange for the title of Pope. His birth name was Rodrigo Borgia.

MICHELOTTO (CHIARO)

A legendary assassin. After saving Cesare's life, he now serves him, and goes in public by the false name of Michele da Corella. His real name is Chiaro.

AAAAH!!
JUST A DREAM!?
HOW FORE-BODING...
ESCAPING ROME AND COMING TO THIS CASTLE IN OSTIA ONLY TO BE MET WITH SUCH NIGHT-MARES!
THOSE EVIL EYES!
HUH?
CLATTER

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
THE WORLD IS BEING SWAL-LOWED UP BY DARK-NESS...

DASH
CARDINAL ROVERE, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
!?
WHO ARE YOU!?
RAH!
S-SOMEBODY!
AAAH!
FIND THEM!
THEY COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR!
BURGLARS!
BURGLARS HAVE BROKEN IN!
CARDINAL ROVERE!
ARE YOU HURT?
URH...
I'M FINE.

DAMN.
GLINT
AGH!
WHO...
WHO GOES THERE!?
S-SOMEBODY!
SOMEBODY COME AT ONCE!
SLICE
WHUMP

WHAT DID YOU SAY, FATHER?
AND DON'T COME BACK TO ROME UNTIL YOU DO!
ENOUGH. I DON'T NEED YOUR EXCUSES.
FINISH THAT SCOUNDREL OFF!
IT SEEMS THAT ...
...YOU'VE DONE A VERY SELFISH THING.
ANY MORE BLUNDERS LIKE THAT AND I'LL HAVE THEM--

UH... I...
I JUST TRIED TO SHOW THAT BAST-- I MEAN, ROVERE--
WITH HIS SHIFTY METH-ODS...
...ALL HE DOES IS GET IN MY WAY!
HE'S BECOM-ING A THORN IN MY SIDE!

IN-DEED ...

I MUSTN'T LET DOWN MY GUARD!
IT'S OBVIOUS.
BUT HOW!? ALL THE WAY OUT HERE--!
BUT WHO WOULD DARE...
...TRY SOME-THING LIKE THIS?

WHAT!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU FAILED?
YOU'RE SAYING YOU RAN AWAY EMPTY HANDED?
HE WAS TOO ALERT. BEFORE WE COULD SNEAK UP ON HIM, HE--

MICHEL-OTTO.
CLICK
THAT'S RIGHT. ASSASSIN MICHEL-OTTO.
LISTEN CLOSELY. I'M IN NEED OF YOUR SKILL.
MICHE-LOTTO AGAIN, EH?

CHILL
NOW THAT HE KNOWS SOMEONE IS AFTER HIM...
...HE'LL NO LONGER JUST HIDE IN THE OUT-SKIRTS OF ROME.
I'M REFER-RING TO CARDINAL ROVERE.
HE'S BOUND TO TAKE EXTREME MEASURES NOW.
SQUEEZE
PLEASE...
...NEVER KEEP YOUR ACTIONS A SECRET FROM ME AGAIN.
IF YOU DO...
...SOME TERRIBLE THING MIGHT HAPPEN TO YOU.
FATHER!

AAAR!
THP
SPLASH
BAM

DISPOSE OF THOSE GOONS. BEFORE THEY GET TO OSTIA!
.....
HWAAH
SLASH

ANOTHER ONE!?
drip
WHUMP
SLASH
A CHILD?

NO! NOO!
HUFF
HUFF
SPLASH
SPLASH
I.. I WON'T...
...SAY ANYTHING. I'LL JUST DISAP-PEAR.
P-PLEASE!
S-SPARE ME!
I SWEAR IT!
SO PL..
SLICE
DASH

SSSSHHH

WHUMP
THUD
D..
DADDY
!
GRAB
H... HOW DARE YOU... KILL A POOR CHILD ...
CURSE .. ..YOU!
DRDDP

YOU NEVER ASK ME ANYTHING.
DON'T I DISGUST YOU?
ALL PEOPLE HAVE THEIR OWN CIRCUM-STANCES.
YOU CAN TALK WHEN YOU'RE READY.

RUSTLE
AH, WEL-COME.
I WAS WAITING FOR YOU.

OH YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT
BUT THAT WAS FAST!
I'D HEARD THAT SIGNORE JUAN WASN'T PLANNING ON LEAVING ROME.
I GUESS THAT WAS JUST A RUMOR
I WONDER IF THE OTHER RUMOR ABOUT HIS SUSPICIOUS ASSOCIATION WITH PRINCE DJEM WAS FALSE, TOO?
IT'S SAID THEY WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER.
I HEARD THE POPE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THAT AND THAT'S WHY HE SPED UP THE WEDDING.
REALLY !? Heh heh heh
Seville Prima Diem
WELL, I GUESS THOSE KINDS OF THINGS HAPPEN.
IT'S A REALITY IN THIS DAY AND AGE.
THE POPE WANTS TO SOLIDIFY HIS FOOTING.

WOW ...
THAT'S SUCH A BEAUTIFUL MELODY
REALLY.
IT'S TOO GOOD FOR ME.
MY GOD..
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
CHEER
CHEER
THE POPE JUST LOVES FLASHINESS, DOESN'T HE?
IT'S ANOTHER MARRIAGE!
HIS SECOND SON, JUAN, IS GAINING GROUND IN SPAIN.
YEAH, FINALLY.

I'LL BE CARE-FUL!
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE ACTING STRANGE TODAY
NOT TO MENTION, YOU DO STAND OUT A BIT
MY INFOR-MATION NETWORK REACHES EVERY-WHERE.
HOW DID YOU..
CESARE!
THE REWARD MONEY FOR THE ASSAS-SINATION OF PRINCE DJEM IS 300,000 DUCATO.
YOU WOULDN'T UNDER-STAND.
JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
STRETCH
IT'LL BE NICE TO DO A LITTLE READING, JUST LIKE IN THE OLD DAYS.
I'M GOING TO TAKE A BREAK FROM THE PHYSI-CAL.
HE HATES ME WITH A PASSION.
IT'LL BE EASIER ON JUAN THIS WAY.
YOU ...
SURE IT'S OKAY IF YOU DON'T ATTEND THE CELEBRA-TION?
CHIA-RO.
I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN GOING TO PRINCE DJEM'S PLACE A LOT.
YOU SHOULDN'T GET TOO DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH HIM.

YES.
LIKE ALL THE OTHERS, YOU TOO...
VALUE ?
. WERE ENSNARED BY HIS POWERFUL CHARISMA.
HE SETTLED HERE IN ROME, WHERE HE RECEIVES A LARGE SUM OF MONEY ANNUALLY...
AND HAS ONE OTHER ITEM OF GREAT VALUE.
THE WINNER WAS THE ELDER BROTHER, BAYAZIT.
DJEM WAS FORCED TO SUBMIT TO THE CONDITION THAT HE NEVER RETURN TO THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE -- AND THAT HE LIVE OUT THE REST OF HIS DAYS AS A HOSTAGE IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY
THAT MAN . IS INVOLVED IN A WAR?
I'D NEVER HAVE IMAGINED... A GENTLEMAN LIKE HIMSELF
WHAT BETTER TOOL TO USE TO SUPPRESS THE DISORDERLY TURKS?
ONE CAN KEEP TABS ON THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE BY USING DJEM AS A SHIELD
TO THE POINT THAT IT FRIGHTENS THE SULTAN.
SO LONG AS HE REMAINS DEFEATED, HE'LL NEVER SEE HIS HOME COUNTRY AGAIN. DJEM'S RETAINERS, WHO LOVE THE PRINCE DEARLY, ARE MANY.

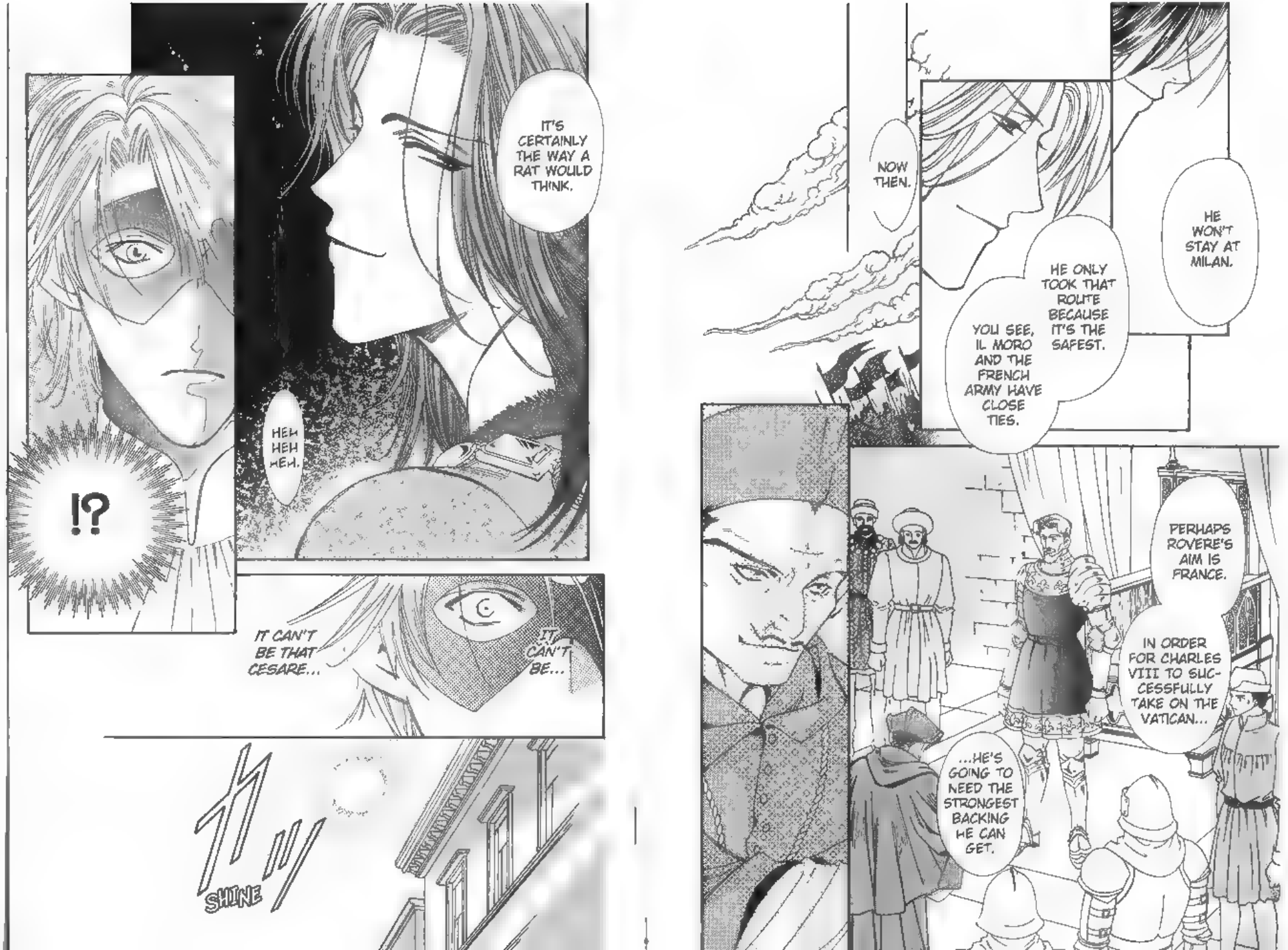
MY FATHER DECLINED THE OFFER. RIGHT NOW...
.. HE FINDS THE YEARLY PAYMENT FOR KEEPING DJEM HOSTAGE MORE APPEALING
SULTAN BAYAZIT OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE STATED IT IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE POPE
THEY SAY IT WAS PRINCE DJEM'S OLDER BROTHER .
I'M NOT THE ONE WHO ISSUED THE ORDER
LET ME GO. CALM DOWN.
.....!
IT'S A "FAMILY CIVIL WAR," SO TO SPEAK.
AFTER THEIR FATHER'S DEATH, THE TWO BROTHERS FOUGHT OVER WHO WOULD BECOME SUCCESSOR.
WELL, HE'S NEVER REALLY TALKED ABOUT HIMSELF.
OH, HAVEN'T YOU HEARD?
HOSTAGE?

AH, SO HE'S BACK
I WAS GETTING IMPATIENT.
FORGIVE ME FOR INTER-RUPTING BUT
MONSIEUR DELLA VOLPE IS REQUESTING AN AUDIENCE.
You're fast
You told me not to have it off in front of people, remember?
HMPH.
IT TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH
!
WHAT NEWS DO YOU BRING?
I, TAGIO DELLA VOLPE, AM BACK FROM MY LEAVE.
WELL...

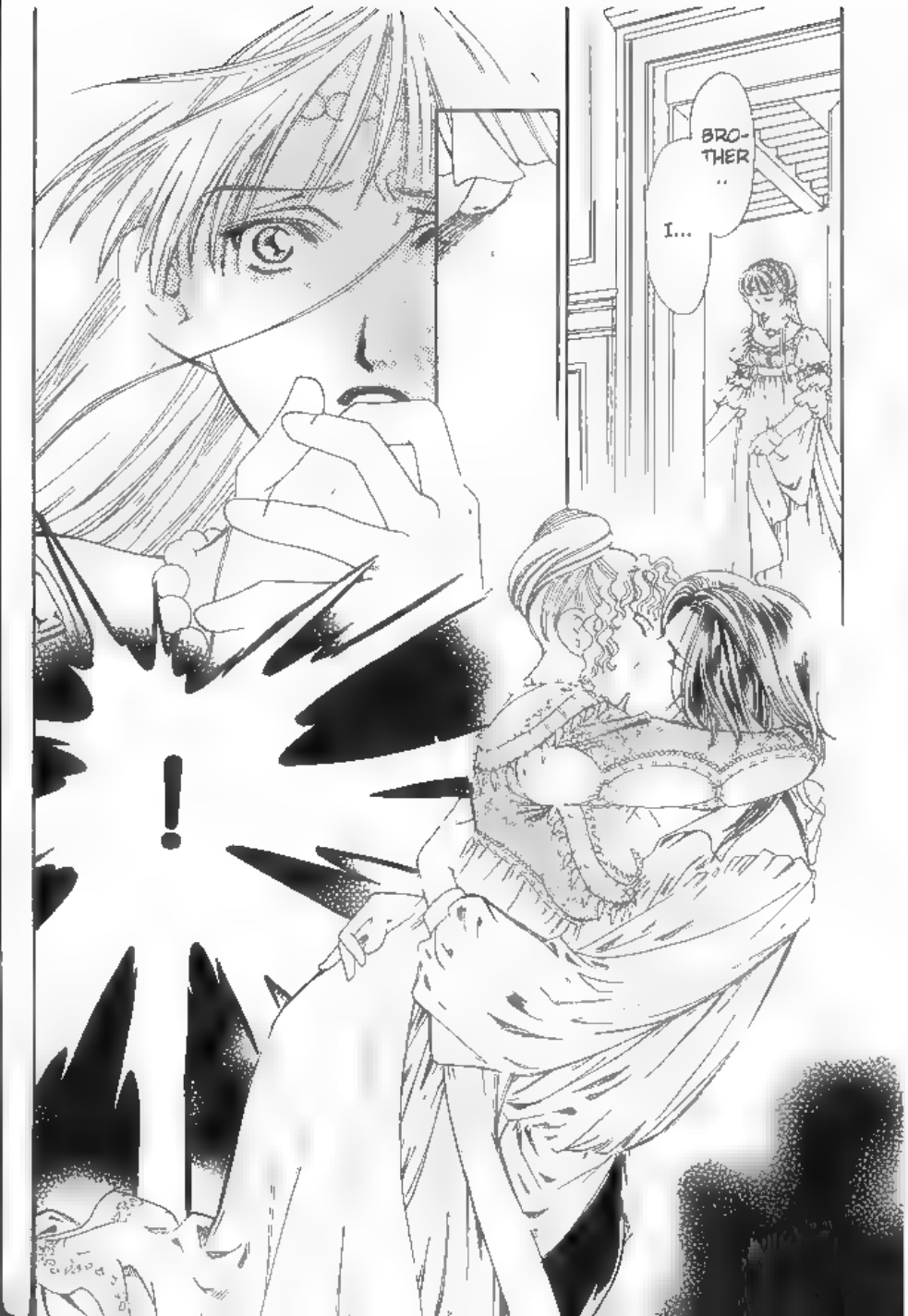
DARK-NESS...
IT DOESN'T SEEM APPRO-PRIATE TO USE THAT WORD TO DESCRIBE HIM.
THOUGH THOSE WHO REVERE HIM WOULD HAVE HIM FIGHT FOR HIS THRONE, HE IS IN REALITY A GENTLE CREATURE
YOU DON'T UNDER-STAND HIM AS I DO.
I DO NOT LIKE THAT PRINCE.
THAT'S WHY THE DARKNESS AROUND HIM IS SO DEEP.
HE'S HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FIGHT
HE'S DRAWN TO IT
JUST AS I AM DRAWN TO IT
NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE WISHES TO HAVE IT .HE CAN'T OBTAIN IT

JOFRE. OH, THAT'S RIGHT. HE MARRIED THE PRINCESS OF THE ARAGON ROYAL FAMILY.
IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE POPE HAS REJECTED THE FRENCH KING AS A POSSIBLE RULER.
WITH JOFRE'S RUSHED MARRIAGE AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE,
MY FATHER ALWAYS DID FAVOR THE SPANISH.
I see
HE SOUNDS LIKE A MAN WHO TAKES HIS AMBITIONS A BIT TOO FAR.
EVEN IF CHARLES VIII IS THE DESCENDENT OF ONE OF THE ANCIENT GOVERNORS, IT'S PREPOSTEROUS TO THINK THAT SUCH A CONDITION MERITS HIM THE THRONE
CARDINAL ROVERE DESERTED OSTIA AND DROPPED IN UNEXPECTEDLY AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE PRIME MINSTER OF MILAN, IL MORO.
I HAVE OTHER NEWS TOO.
THE TIME OF QUARRELING BETWEEN SMALL ITALIAN MONARCHS IS COMING TO AN END.
AT THIS RATE, IT'S INEVITABLE THAT THE FRENCH ARMY WILL TEAR THROUGH ITALY.

IT SEEMS THE RUMORS THAT THE KING OF FRANCE CHARLES VIII, IS ADVANCING TOWARDS ITALY...
ARE TRUE
WOULD YOU PLEASE CONTINUE, TAGIO?
MICHELOTTO. I WANT YOU TO LISTEN TOO.
I don't feel very welcome
WELL IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
Milan (Monarchy)
Genoa (Republic)
Florence (Republic)
Siena (Republic)
Venice (Republic)
Ferrara (Este Duke Rule)
The Papal States
Adriatic Sea
Rome
Kingdom of Naples
City of Naples
Tyrrhenian Sea
Sicily
NAPLES IS CURRENTLY UNDER THE RULE OF THE SPANISH ROYAL FAMILY, THE ARAGONS.
FRENCH RULE OF THE REGION, IN CONTRAST, DATES FROM OVER A CENTURY AGO.
CHARLES VIII SEEKS TO MAKE THE RIGHT TO SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE IN NAPLES HIS.
HE'S ALREADY BEGUN AMASSING HIS TROOPS AT GRENOBLE.
AMASSING HIS TROOPS...!? THE WAR HAS BEGUN!?


IT'S CERTAINLY THE WAY A RAT WOULD THINK.
HEH HEH HEH.
!?
IT CAN'T BE THAT CESARE...
IT CAN'T BE...
SHINE
NOW THEN.
HE WON'T STAY AT MILAN.
HE ONLY TOOK THAT ROUTE BECAUSE IT'S THE SAFEST.
YOU SEE, IL MORO AND THE FRENCH ARMY HAVE CLOSE TIES.
PERHAPS ROVERE'S AIM IS FRANCE.
IN ORDER FOR CHARLES VIII TO SUCCESSFULLY TAKE ON THE VATICAN...
...HE'S GOING TO NEED THE STRONGEST BACKING HE CAN GET.

HONESTLY AND NOW WITH THIS TALK ABOUT THE FRENCH ARMY FINALLY CROSSING THE ALPS. THERE'S SO LITTLE DECENCY LEFT IN THE WORLD..
I CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT FROM WORRY.
And it's so hot.
YOU KNOW YOU CANNOT LEAVE THE CASTLE. OUTSIDE, THE PLAGUE IS SPREADING
BESIDES, ROME'S PUBLIC ORDER IS DETERIORATING!
gulp
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, LUCREZIA?
OH UH. I WAS ON MY WAY TO BORGO PALACE
BORGO?
YOU'RE GOING TO CESARE AGAIN?
pat
GROW UP AND STOP HANGING ONTO YOUR BROTHER, LUCREZIA.
REMEMBER, YOU'RE THE WIFE OF THE LORD OF PASARO!
I KNOW THAT.
I KNOW...
BUT STILL...
wobble
-Kmmm
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIM!?
ARE YOU..
AAH!
THE PLAGUE!
IT'S THE PLAGUE!


BRO-
THER
..
I...
!

DEAR
GOD
...
IT
GROWS
STRON-
GER BY
THE DAY
...
PLEASE
FREE ME
FROM THIS
FEELING OF
GUILT.
THIS
FEELING...
YES
SIR.
WHAT
DO YOU
WANT
ME TO
DO?
IT'S
LUCRE-
ZIA ..?
slip
IT'S
FINE.
LET
HER
IN.
Y.
YES
SIR..

T-TOMORROW I'LL BE LEAVING FOR PASARO WITH MY HUSBAND.
I JUST WANTED TO SAY GOODBYE..
OH
SHONE
I SEE.
THAT WOULD BE BEST. THINGS HAVE GOTTEN DANGEROUS HERE.
I'VE ALWAYS HEARD THAT THE SMALL COUNTRIES ALONG THE ADRIATIC COAST ARE BEAUTIFUL
I'M SURE THE PEOPLE OF PASARO HAVE BEEN WAITING..
FOR THEIR BEAUTIFUL BRIDE TO COME TO THEM.

OH ...
SHOCK
HEY.
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER, LUCREZIA?

Humph! You're no fun
I'M SORRY BUT...
...WOULD YOU GO HOME EARLY, FIAMMETTA?
WHAT A CUTE LITTLE THING
SHE REALLY IS OBSESSED WITH YOU.
FLOP
UNTIL NEXT WE MEET
W...
WEL... THEN, BROTHER...

The summer of 1494, the French army breeched the castle at Torino and turned its forces Southward.
The small nation-states of the Lombardia region fell to the brigade one after another.
Plunder. Rape. Pandemonium shook the earth...
...and ominous dark clouds covered the land.
SOMEHOW, CARDINAL ROVERE
...BECAME A DEPENDENT OF FRANCE AND IS NOW THE KING'S RIGHT-HAND MAN.
HE'D TELL THE KING ANYTHING--NO MATTER HOW UNTRUE!
THAT OLD RAT!
UH, IT'S ALL TRUE.
HOW DARE HE!
JUST WHO GAVE HIM THE RIGHT TO DO THAT!?
WHAT!? CHARLES VIII...
...IS PRESSING CHARGES TO ABDICATE ME!?

RUMBLE
ROAR

LIKE THE ANGEL FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS WHO PASSES FINAL JUDGEMENT?
HEH.
IT WON'T BE LONG UNTIL THE BANNERS OF THE FRENCH ARMY, TOO, ARE SEEN ALONG THE HORIZON.
THEY'RE COMING TO TRAMPLE ITALY FOR ME.
AMAZING. . YOU CAN CAPTURE THE ENTIRE HORIZON IN ONE SWEEP OF THE EYE
WHENEVER I COME HERE, I SEE MANY VISIONS.
THIS SO-CALLED ANGEL ...
. RELINQUISHES HIS NAME TO YOU, MICHAEL.

STANDING THERE...
YOU LOOK LIKE AN ANGEL IN A CRIMSON ROBE.
CESARE.

THEN WHY DID YOU HAVE ME KILL THEM!?
!?
IT WAS ALL PART OF MY CALCULATIONS.
THEN THAT MEANS...
..WHEN THOSE ASSASSINS FAILED
FROM THE START, THAT OLD MAN WAS SHARP.
HE CAUGHT ON QUICKLY.

I COULDN'T AFFORD TO HAVE THEM CAUSE TROUBLE LATER.
THEY WERE PAWNS SACRIFICED TO THE GREAT GAME.
SACRIFICES!

!?
FOR YOU?
YES.
AND ROVERE IS GOING TO BUY ME A MOST IMPORTANT OFFICE.
THE SHARPER THE CLAWS THAT SCAR THIS COUNTRY, THE BETTER.

DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
I WARNED HIM THROUGH DARK DREAMS.
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS.
I MADE SURE TO SAVE THAT OLD GEEZER'S LIFE.
BECAUSE I KNEW HE'D EVENTUALLY BE OF USE TO ME.

!?
FROM NOW ON.
.. I'LL BE PUTTING YOU THROUGH EVEN MORE HORRENDOUS ACTS.
AS LONG AS I STILL HOLD SWAY OVER YOUR ANGELIC HEART
SO IF YOU WANT TO HIT ME, HIT ME AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE.
ONLY ...

DON'T EVER ABANDON ME.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.

SLAP
YOU... YOU...!

ARE YOU..
SATISFIED?

WOOOOOO
BRETHREN, IF YOU SEEK SALVATION FOR YOUR SOULS...
CAST INTO THE FLAMES ALL THE VANITIES OF THIS FRAIL AND MISERABLE WORLD!
THERE IS NO OTHER PATH TO ESCAPE THE TORTURES OF HELL..
..FOR THOSE WHO ARE WROUGHT WITH SIN!
SEEMS THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY IS BAILING ON EVERYONE. WELL, THIS REALLY IS THE END.
THAT MAN JUST NOW... HE COULDN'T BE THE HEAD OF THE MEDICI FAMILY...?
SAVONAROLA!
HA! SAVONAROLA!
THEY ARE THE WRATH OF GOD COME TO CAST JUDGEMENT ON THE WICKEDNESS OF ITALY!
EVEN IF THE FRENCH INVADE THIS LAND, DO NOT FEAR!
DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYING TO GOD!
DISPOSE OF ALL OSTENTATION!
CRACKLE
SNAP

Florence
ROAR
sidle
FREEDOM FOR THE CITIZENS!!
STRIKE DOWN THE MEDICI CREST!
BOOM
BAM

COME HERE! DON'T SPEAK WITH SUCH A MAN AS HIM.
YOU SHOULDN'T GET INVOLVED WITH THOSE WHO ARE STRANGE OR DIFFERENT!
Ee!
HEY!
I TOLD YOU IT'S TOO DANGER-OUS FOR YOU TO BE OUT HERE, DIDN'T I!?
WHEN WILL THE FRENCH COME?
WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO US?
SOONER OR LATER, YOU'LL GET QUESTIONED FOR HERESY
,AND BURNED AT THE STAKE!

THE INEVITABLE STORM WILL COME TO PASS.
IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN THE SIGN OF A BRAND NEW ERA.
LISTEN BOYS.
THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY

SO EVEN THE CAPITAL OF FINE ARTS, THIS FLOWER CALLED FLORENCE...
FLAP
...HAS FALLEN INTO MADNESS?
NICCO-LO!
HEY, NICCOLO!

I DON'T KNOW...
..WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
WAIT, NICCOLO!
EVERY-ONE SAYS YOU'RE A SOR-CERER!
IS IT TRUE YOU CAN SEE THE FUTURE IN A CRYSTAL BALL?
YES?

Long live France!
With Charles VIII leading them, the French Army advanced onward from Romania to the Tuscany region.
The increasingly successful advance continued. Compared to Charles' massive army, the various states of Italy only armed with a small-scale brigade..
...could do nothing but helplessly prostrate themselves before the massive power.
Fenize was in a state of frenzied excitement and speedily accepted this "trial sent from God," obediently going under their rule.
AND ...
...TO QUENCH MY INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY.
RATTLE
RATTLE
Rome

AH.
AAAAAAH!
!?
WHAT IS IT MARCO?
THOUGH I DON'T KNOW IF HE WILL BRING ABOUT BLESSINGS OR DISASTER.
THE TIMES WILL CHANGE-- BECAUSE A CERTAIN MAN WAS BORN TO BRING ABOUT REVOLUTION.

I..
.. WANT TO FEEL THE WINDS OF CHANGE MYSELF
THE NEW ERA JUST KEEPS GETTING MORE AND MORE INTERESTING.

HOS-TAGE !?
THEY SAID YOU HAVE TO BE TAKEN HOSTAGE!?
!!
ASCANIO SFORZA, WHO REQUESTED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING OF FRANCE, CAME TO PUT A RESTRAINING ORDER ON ME
YEAH IT'S MY FIRST TIME.
I WONDER WHAT I SHOULD PACK.
WITH THE POPE'S RECORD OF SHADY CONDUCT IT'S CERTAIN THAT HE'LL BE TRIED FOR ABDICATION.
THE FRENCH KING IS CURRENTLY OCCUPYING FLORENCE AND HAVING COMMENCED A RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY, HE'S ENRAGED THE POPE WITH A STATEMENT AGAINST HIM.
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN TURN DOWN HIS ORDERS.
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO GO!?
ERGH! THIS IS NOT A SITUATION TO BE TALKING ALL CARE-FREE ABOUT!

A REPLY FROM LORD ASCANIO SFORZA CAME SOME TIME AGO.
CARDINAL CESARE BORGIA.
PLEASE GO TO COLONNA FORTRESS.
YES...

ROAR
ROAR
WHAT!? THE NAPLES BATTALION WAS FORCED TO RETREAT FROM THE CITY OF ROME!?
WHO DO THOSE DAMN FRENCH MONGRELS THINK THEY ARE!?
YOU MUST TRANSPORT THESE VALUABLES OUT OF THE VATICAN!
THE FRENCH FORCES COULD BE UPON US ANY MINUTE!
The French army continued its march from Viterbo to Civitavecchia.
And then Rome itself came within their reach.
WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THIS ONE?
AH.
WE'LL PUT IT WITH THE REST HEADED FOR SANTA ANGELO CASTLE
WHAT!?
YOUR HOLINESS, IT'S AN EMERGENCY!
THE ORSINI FAMILY HAS SIDED WITH THE FRENCH! THEY OPENED THE CASTLE GATE! ROME'S DEFENSE FORCE HAS BEEN COMPLETELY DESTROYED!
The city of Rome cowered in the shadow of the French army as hundreds fled its streets.

Ba
dum
SPEAKING OF LORD SFORZA, I JUST REMEMBERED THAT HE'S THE LITTLE BROTHER OF IL MORO FROM MILAN
I AGREE.
Hot, huh
FORGIVE ME. I JUST CAN'T HELP ENVISIONING ROVERE'S PERMANENT SCOWL IN THE BACKGROUND LIKE AN ANGRY MONKEY
WILL YOU REALLY BE ALL RIGHT?
THEY WON'T TORTURE YOU, WILL THEY?
DON'T WORRY.
THIS IS BEYOND POLITICS IF THE SITUATION GETS OUT OF HAND, I'LL COME BACK IMMEDIATELY
I THINK I'LL PASS!
YOU GET LONELY WHEN I'M NOT AROUND, DON'T YOU, CHIARO?
You can always come along, you know

I INTEND NEVER TO RETURN TO THE POPE'S QUARTERS AGAIN.
NO.
I SNUCK OUT OF THE POPE'S COURT IN SECRET AND CAME HERE TO BE WITH MY BROTHER.
DON'T TELL ME YOU WERE ALSO TAKEN PRISONER. I CAN'T IMAGINE IT.
DOES FATHER KNOW OF THIS?
I LOVE YOU, CESARE.
I DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT FIRST. .
BUT ..
...OVER TIME MY FEELINGS BEGAN TO DEEPEN. IT HURT ME INSIDE SO I TRIED TO FORGET.
BUT I COULD NEVER FORGET.
EVEN IF FOR ONLY ONE NIGHT...

IS THAT..?
WELCOME, SIGNORE CESARE ... TO COLONNA FORTRESS
CESARE
SO IT WAS YOU I SAW, GILLIA.
I WASN'T EXPECTING TO SEE YOU HERE.

YOU'RE UGLY.
A FILTHY PIG.
UGLY..
.....!!
A HA HA HA HA!
WHAT !?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU FAILED TO ASSUAGE HIM!?

NOW...
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I SEE.
THAT'S ...A THING OF THE PAST
I'M THE MAN ...
...WHO KILLED YOUR LOVER.
I SEE.
WOMEN REALLY ARE DESPERATE CREATURES.
AH.
GIULIA.
Heh.

SWEET HONEY LIKE THAT OF A POISONOUS FLOWER...
YOU CAN'T LEAVE, CESARE.
I WANT YOU. YOU WHO NOTHING CAN STOP.
LISTEN TO WHAT I'M TELLING YOU. MY ASCENDANCE TO MY POSITION TODAY CAN BE ACCREDITED TO MY SENSE OF DEVOTION
YOU TOLD ME THAT YOURSELF-- REMEMBER, BROTHER?
THIS IS ROME -
USING YOUR CHARM WASN'T ENOUGH?
I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE THE PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO TURN CESARE TO OUR SIDE.
UNLIKE THE POPE, HE SEEMS TO BE A MUCH HARDER NUT TO CRACK.
It's not just his looks that make him different from the old man
BROTHER, PLEASE...
...DON'T LET THAT MAN LEAVE THE FORTRESS.
GIULIA
CHILL
THAT WOULD BE
AND IF THAT'S NOT ALLOWED ...
...THEN LET ME BE THE ONE WHO KILLS H.M.
KEEP HIM IN THE LOWER CHAMBERS. I WON'T LET HIM SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY UNTIL I'VE MADE HIM MINE.
I OWN THAT MAN.

On December 31st, 1494, the French army finally stormed the gates of Rome like a fiercely blowing tempest.
GIULIA?
OOH!
I'M ALL ALONE IN THIS!
WHERE ARE YOU, GIULIA!?
GIULIA?
PLEASE COME TO MY SIDE!
CONSOLE ME, WHO NO ONE WILL HELP!
OH!
CESARE! WHAT OF CESARE!?
HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO RETURN NOW!

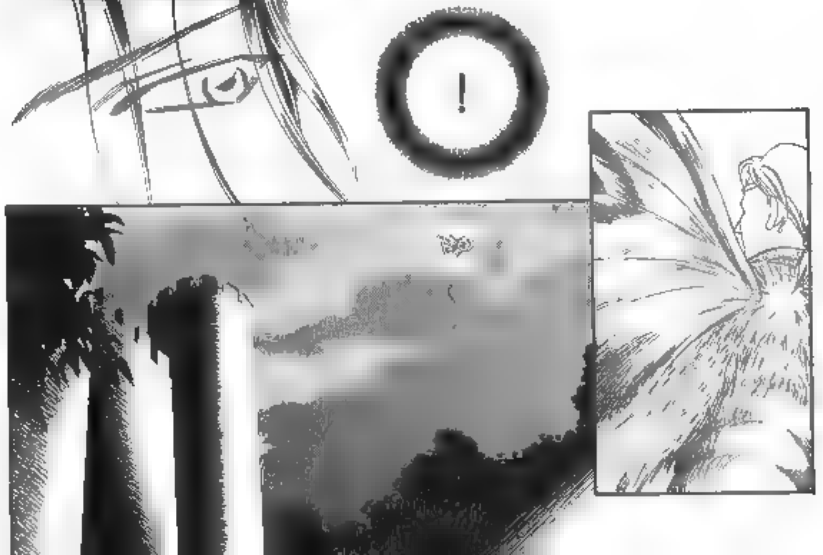
YOU KNOW JUST HOW TO FLATTER ME
Wa ha ha ha!
THIS SIMPLE-MINDED FOOL IS QUITE EASY TO MANIPULATE.
YOUR EXCELLENCY, YOU WILL BRING AN IRON HAMMER DOWN UPON THIS ROTTED VATICAN . . .AND SMASH IT SUCH IS THE ROLE OF A MESSENGER OF GOD
AS YOU WISH, YOUR MAJESTY
I WILL PURGE THIS LAND THROUGH THE DIVINE WILL OF GOD!
SO THIS IS THE COUNTRY RULED BY A FIEND WHO GAINED HIS HOLY TITLE THROUGH CORRUPTION.
AND WITH THE FRENCH ARMY BEHIND ME, NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE!
WITH JUST A LITTLE MORE PUSHING, I'LL HAVE THIS MAN AGREEING ON THE ABDICATION OF THE POPE.
FRANCIA!
COLONNA!
FRANCIA!
COLONNA! HURRAH FOR THE ALLIANCE!
VINCO-!

CESARE...
...COULD IT BE THE STORM THAT IS MAKING ME UNEASY?
I KNOW THIS AFFAIR IS NOTHING FOR A MAN LIKE YOU, BUT...
...NONE OF THEM HAVE RETURNED.
WE'VE SENT SEVERAL MESSENGERS ALREADY, BUT...
...WE CAN SAFELY ASSUME HE'S STILL BEING HELD CAPTIVE.
SINCE NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WHERE HE IS...

HMPH. WHAT A DISGRACE.
WHAT...
WHAT SHOULD I DO!?
NOW OF ALL TIMES, WHEN I COULD ACTUALLY USE YOUR DEMONIC POWER!
WHY HAVEN'T YOU COME HOME, CESARE!?
NOW..
SO YOU'RE ALSO GOING TO COLONNA FORTRESS?
IT SEEMS WE'RE HEADED IN THE SAME DIRECTION
SIGNORE DELLA VOLPE.
RUSTLE
MICHELE DA CORELLA!

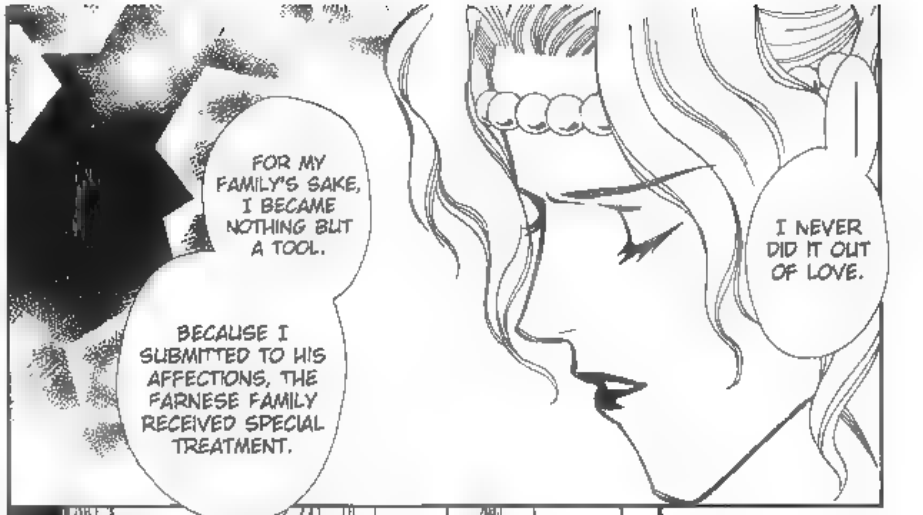
WHOA
DOWN BOY...!
WAIT, DELLA VOLPE!
WHO IS THIS MYSTE-RIOUS--!?
!
YOU'RE...

JANGLE
JANGLE


!

DASH
IF YOU WANT TO KEEP UP WITH HIM...
...YOU MUST TAKE HIM FOR WHAT HE IS, NO QUESTIONS ASKED.
IF YOU CAN'T ...
THEN JUST WASH YOUR HANDS OF THIS AFFAIR
WE CAN STILL MAKE IT...
IF WE LEAVE NOW!

I TOLD YOU.
I SEE AND KNOW ALL.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT NAME, ?
SO YOU REMEMBER ME?
ER-- I SUPPOSE I SHOULD CALL YOU MICHELOTTO IN THIS SITUATION, NO?
MY, HOW YOU'VE GROWN.
SAVE THE EXPLANATIONS FOR LATER. AS WE SPEAK, YOUR PRECIOUS MONARCH IS IN GREAT TROUBLE!
UM.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
WHO IS THIS SUSPICIOUS MAN?
I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY.
PLEASE FOLLOW ME
flutter
flutter
STUNNED
WH-- WHAT? IS THIS A DREAM?
NO, IT MUST BE A NIGHTMARE!


FOR MY FAMILY'S SAKE, I BECAME NOTHING BUT A TOOL.
BECAUSE I SUBMITTED TO HIS AFFECTIONS, THE FARNESE FAMILY RECEIVED SPECIAL TREATMENT.
I NEVER DID IT OUT OF LOVE.

SHALL I TELL YOU SOMETHING TASTY?
I JUST RECEIVED NEWS THAT. .
...A TROOP OF FRENCH SOLDIERS ARE HEADED FOR MADAM VANOZZA'S ESTATE.
A MAN LIKE YOU WOULD NEVER UNDERSTAND THE HUMILIATION OF GIVING YOUR BODY TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T LOVE.
OVER *YOU* AS WELL, CESARE.
BUT I HAVE TRIUMPHED OVER EVERY-THING.

COME NOW, CESARE.
I DON'T *WANT* TO DO THIS TO YOU.
IT PAINS ME TO SEE YOUR BODY GET DAMAGED
CRANK
CRANK

MY FATHER WAS AWFULLY GOOD TO YOU
THOSE ARE THE WORDS OF ONE WHO WOULD PROSTITUTE HERSELF FOR ANY GAIN.
PLEASE. DON'T MAKE ME DO ANYTHING WORSE TO YOU.
JUST SAY YOU'LL BETRAY THE POPE.

CAN THIS.
M--
MON-STER!
...BE REAL!?
GOLDEN EYES!
BEAU-TIFUL
IS THIS YOUR TRUE SELF?
PERHAPS YOU AREN'T HUMAN AFTER ALL.
AS FOR WHY YOU'RE THAT WAY.
...I COULD CARE LESS!
ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU BE-COME MINE!

HA!
YOU YEARN TO FLY FROM THIS PRISON TO YOUR PRECIOUS MOTHER'S SIDE, DON'T YOU?
I WILL ALLOW IT, IF YOU DO AS I SAY
..AND THE ORSINIS HAVING SIDED WITH FRANCE, THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO PROTECT HER.
WITH THE DEFENSE FORCES ALREADY WITH-DRAWN ...
CRASH
WHAT...
...WAS THAT!?

CLINK
AH..
AAAH...
MY BODY... WON'T LISTEN TO...
!
SWIPE!!
WHOOSH
IN THAT CASE...
COME
GIULIA.

EVEN IF IT MEANS KILLING YOU
CAN YOU...
..DO IT?
!?
YOU'RE A BAD WOMAN.
YOU
...REALLY ARE GOING TO MAKE ME DO THIS, AREN'T YOU?

AARGH!!
YOU DAMNED MONSTER !!
DASH
CLANG

!
WAIT !
I'M COM-ING TO GET YOU!
.....
CHIARO.

SLICE
SO YOU DECIDED TO COME, TAGIO.
YOU DON'T BRING SHAME TO YOUR LOYAL RETAINER NAME, EH?
I COULDN'T VERY WELL LEAVE LORD CESARE TO YOU ALONE.
CRANK
CRANK
GRRK-
IT'S YOU!?
THE MOTH SORCERER!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
AW, LOOK AT THAT. YOUR LOVELY HANDS HAVE BEEN SPOILED.
SUCH A SHAME

SLASH
WHOA..
HE'S GOT SOME ARM!
WHOOSH
LORD CESARE!

PLEASE, CHIARO.
NO MATTER WHAT
AND JUST WHERE DO YOU PLAN ON GOING IN THIS CONDITION? WE HAVE TO GET THOSE HANDS TREATED BEFORE YOU END UP WITH TWO USELESS ARMS!
GIULA.

THANKS!
GET LORD CESARE OUT OF HERE NOW!
LEAVE THE REST TO ME.
CESARE!
Whoop-ee!
AAARGH!
STEP
STEP
I'M FINE.
JUST GET ME TO A HORSE! THERE'S SOMEWHERE I HAVE TO GO.
YOU OKAY?

DRIVE THAT DAGGER THROUGH YOUR HEART.
DO THAT FOR ME AND...
.. THE LOVE OF THIS THANATOS SHALL BE YOURS
!

I LOVE YOU.
I LOVE YOU, CE-SARE.
!
STEADY
PLEASE DON'T GO.
I LOVE YOU!
YOU'RE LIKE A CHILD THAT BECOMES UNREASONABLE WHEN SHE DOESN'T GET WHAT SHE WANTS...
GILLIA.
I WILL SAY ONE THING MORE BEFORE I GO.
I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU CAN GAIN MY AFFECTION.
HUH?

YOU LOOK TERRI-BLE
LET'S TAKE A SHORT REST.
I DON'T HAVE THE LUXURY
MAKE THIS THING RUN FASTER!
URH
VANOZZA IS HER NAME?
IT'S RARE TO SEE YOU BE THIS DEVOTED TO SOMEONE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
NEVER
. SHOW YOUR FACE TO ME AGA.N.
CLOP
SOB
SOB SOB
CLANG

MADAM, YOU MUST LOOK!
THE LIGHT OF THE SOLDIER'S TORCHES DRAWS NEAR!
I'M FRIGHT-ENED
RUSTLE
CALM DOWN.
COME SIT HERE.
SHE IS THE HOLY FORTRESS WITHIN ME.
MY SACRED TEMPLE
LET US LEAVE EVERYTHING TO THE WILL OF GOD.

TWO OF US IS TOO MUCH FOR HIM.
NEEEE-IGH
NO!
YOU WAIT HERE AND I'LL GO SEE HOW THINGS ARE--
I'LL DO IT.
GET OFF, CHIARO. I'M GOING ALONE.
BUT YOU'RE INJURED!
VANOZZA
DASH
PLEASE BE SAFE!

I'LL BE RIGHT BEHIND YOU!
UNTIL I ARRIVE
...DON'T GET IN TOO MUCH TROUBLE!
DASH
I HAVE A GOOD FRIEND...
...WHO GIVES ME HIS FULL SUPPORT.
I'M A HAPPY MAN.
HMPH.
YOU THINK I'D LET THOSE GUYS GET THE BEST OF ME?
BUT...
your shoulders are dislocated!
...I'M NO ORDINARY HUMAN THIS SMALL THING WILL HEAL IN NO TIME.
YOU ALREADY KNOW ..
HERE.
YOU WOULDN'T BE OF MUCH HELP UNARMED.
SHEESH.
YOU NEVER LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY ANY-WAY!
FINE, I GOT IT.

!
MADAM VANOZZA!
EE...!
AREN'T YOU PREPARED.
GLINT
ANITA!
MADAM VANOZZA ...
YOU MUST... RUN AWAY...

WHO ARE YOU!?
SMIRK
SSSHHH
DO YOU REALIZE THIS IS MADAM VANOZZA'S ESTATE YOU ARE APPROACHING!?
GWAH!
EEEEK!
I WON'T LET YOU TAKE ANOTHER STEP!
ANITA, WARN MADAM VANOZZA!
SHE'S JUST THE POPE'S WHORE!
TSK.
LIKE I CARE!

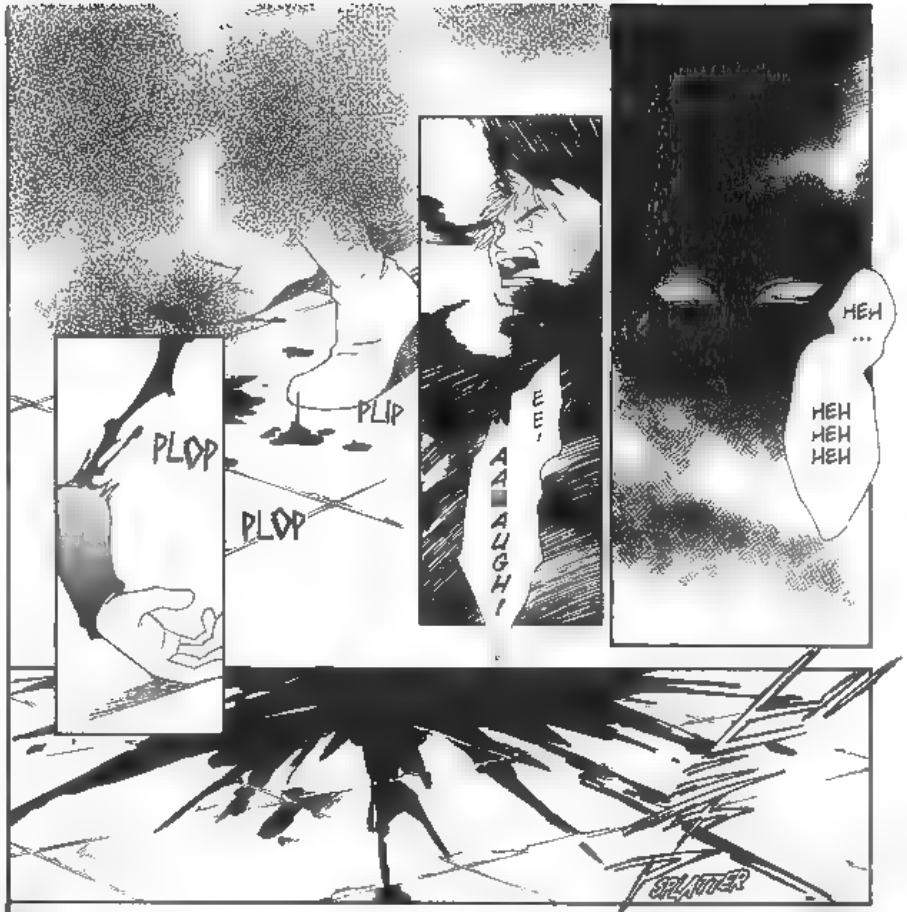
WELL WELL WELL.
AIN'T THIS A FINE JEWEL WE HAVE HERE.
I WAS IMAGINING AN OLD BAG.
He he he he!
IS THAT IT...!?
NO...!
POOR THING ...
IF ONLY YOU AT LEAST HAD ESCAPED
slip
OOOHERS.
AH. AAAH
BAM
EE!

RRRRIP
MY HAND ...
I'LL MAKE IT SOME-HOW!

WHOA!
NEEEEGH
THUD
VANOZZA ...

ROOOOOAR
WHY YOU--!
!?
AAAAH!!
ROLL
!?
WHAT IS...
WHL
HEY, WE BETTER BUST THIS JOINT SOON.
BANG
NO.
I HAVEN'T EVEN GOT-TEN A GO AT 'ER YET
!?
WHO IS THAT!?
CLICK

NO...YOU MUSTN'T GIVE YOUR BODY OVER TO IT
THOSE GOLDEN EYES! THEY'RE PROOF THAT THE DEVIL IS USING YOUR ANGER TO CONTROL YOUR BODY.
...OR YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO RECOVER.
YOU MUSTN'T...
GET HIM!
UP THERE!
HE'S COMING FROM ABOVE!
WH--WHAT THE--!?
WHP
HE VANISHED!
CE... SARE...!?
SLICE


PLOP
PLIP
PLOP
EE!
AA AUGH!
HEH ...
HEH HEH HEH
SPLATTER

THOOOOM
GIANT!
WHA--!!
WHAT'S ALL THIS BLACK SMOKE!?
AA... AAH.

HAAH
NOW... I MUST HOLD THAT CHILD--
slide
HAAH
CE
SA... RE...
CE..
SARE...
SPLAT
AH
AAAH
TREMBLE

GOD, PLEASE...
AH!
AH
UUH!
CE .
...PLEASE... GIVE ME THE STRENGTH...
AH!
OOOH
!
VAN...
THADUMP
OOH...
THADUMP

AAH!
AUUUUUGH!
NO!
DON'T STRUGGLE!
SHH.
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, CHILD.
I KNOW YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO DO THAT.
EVEN THOUGH IT HURTS, YOU MUST BEAR THIS BURDEN.
YOU MUSTN'T GIVE IN TO THE DARKNESS.
SLIDE
YANK
GASP
SARE...
CE...

THIS...
...MIGHT BE THE LAST.
..EM-BRACE I CAN EVER...
GIVE YOU.
SIGH
YOU'VE ...
... GROWN SO BIG...
MY HANDS... CAN'T EVEN... HOLD YOU..

WITH SUCH A FRAGILE HEART AND FRIGHTENED GAZE...
...WHAT WILL MY SWEET LITTLE BOY BECOME?
VANOZZA!
DON'T MOVE. I'LL STOP THE BLOOD!
IT SEEMS... I WON'T HAVE TIME...TO SEE FOR MYSELF.
IT'S TOO LATE.
slip
VA...
NO...

!
AH, IT'S YOU. YOU...
...WILL BE THE ONE WHO WATCHES OVER HIM FOR ME.
AAH... GOD.

THIS LIGHT, IT'S...
WHAT'S... THIS LIGHT?
IT'S...
...A LIGHT FILLED WITH THE BEATING OF LIFE.
CESARE...!

LORD CESARE!
THE HOUSE IS CONSUMED BY FLAMES! YOU MUST GET OUT OF HERE AT--
GASP
!
I AM MOST GRATE-FUL.

HIS FACE HASN'T SHOWN ANY EMOTION : BUT, FOR THAT ONE MOMENT WHEN I SAW IN HIS EYES..!
...IN THE RED HOT FLAMES THAT SCORCHED EVERYTHING...
...THAT SOMETHING WAS THERE

!?
WELL I'M JUST GLAD THAT WASN'T TOO MUCH OF A HASSLE.
CESARE'S BEEN QUIET THE WHOLE TRIP. HE HASN'T SHED A SINGLE TEAR.

MARCH
MARCH
!
SO THE INVASION IS STILL GOING ON?
THE POPULATION'S SUDDENLY GOTTEN QUITE DENSE, HASN'T IT?

IT'S HARD ENOUGH AS IT IS USING A HOT-BLOODED PUPPET LIKE HIM.
WHAT IS IT, CHIARO?
?
CHA-RO.
I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU THINK-ING'?
THAT'S RIGHT
I'M GOING TO SANTA ANGELO
IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO TRY AND REACH SANTA ANGELO RIGHT NOW! YOU'RE THE POPE'S SON!
IF I'M ABSENT FROM THE HOLY FATHER'S PRESENCE ANY LONGER, I MAY LOSE MY JOB.
CESARE.
THAT ROBE--
I WANT TO KEEP THIS FROM THE POPE FOR A WHILE.
HIS FEELINGS CAN BE READ ON HIS FACE MUCH TOO EASILY.
I WANT TO RETURN HER TO THE PLACE WHERE SHE WAS BORN.
TRANSPORT VANOZZA'S REMAINS OUT OF ROME.
WHAT?

GAH!
He got his left arm done too
STOP!
WAAAAH!
THAT BEAST
Kids don't try that at home.
SO...
...YOU CAN CRY OVER A LITTLE THING LIKE THAT.
I KNOW YOU'RE A SCHEMER BY NATURE.
.BUT YOU HOLD YOUR FEELINGS IN TOO MUCH.
ISN'T IT PAINFUL...
...DOING THAT ALL THE TIME?

Wh--
WHAT WAS THAT ALL OF A SUDDEN!?
THAT HURT, YOU KNOW!
Umph!
CRACK
BWAAH!
I FIXED IT FOR YOU.
He's surprisingly level headed
YOU DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE YOUR SHOULDER WAS DISLOCATED?
JEEZ.
HEY!
GIMME YOUR LEFT ONE TOO!
I'm good with physical things like that!
NO THANK YOU.
tremble
tremble

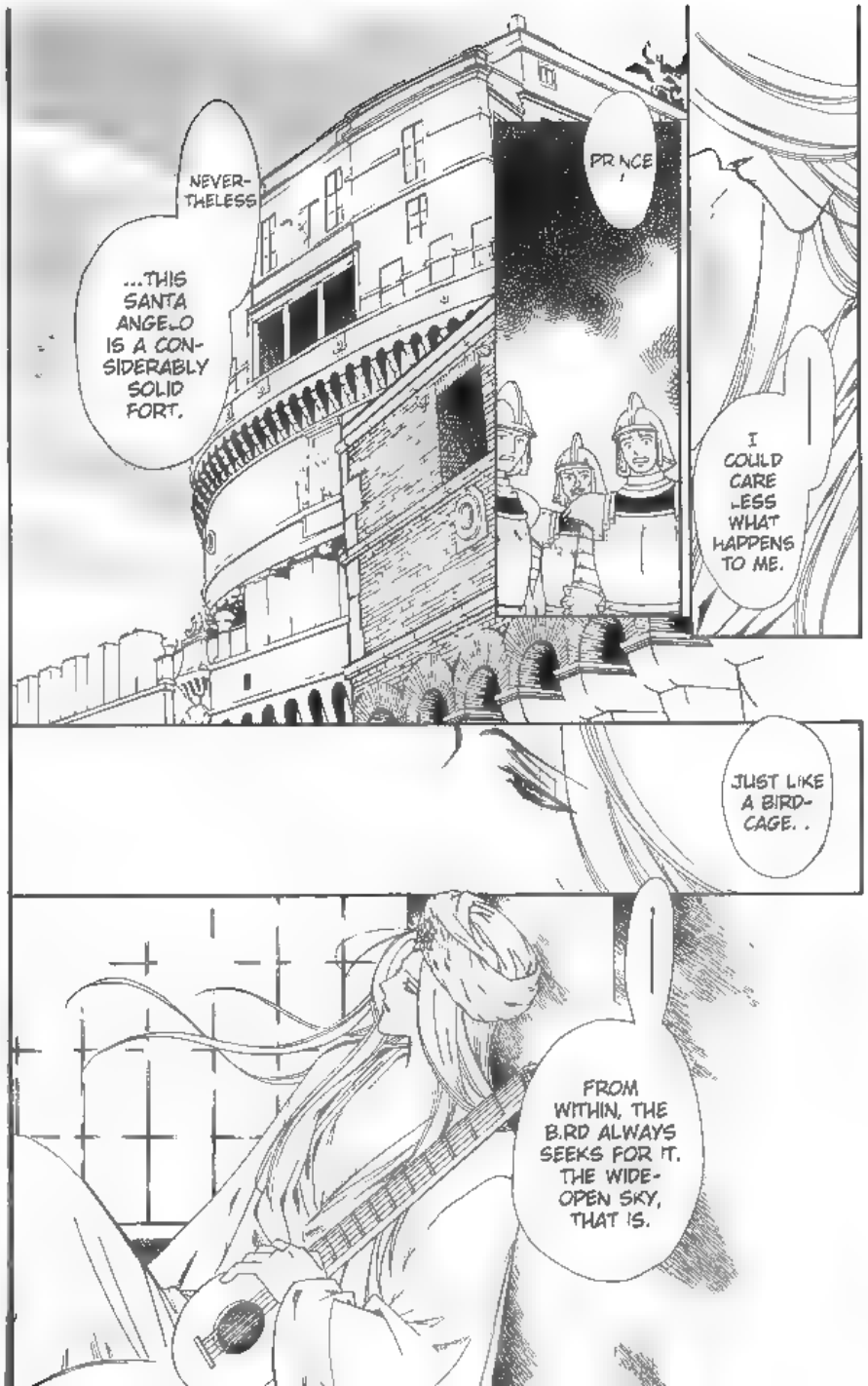
A-
CREAK
Why should I
THE NERVE!
AH!
SLIP

WATCH YOUR STEP, LORD CESARE.
S--
SORRY, TAGIO.

Heh heh heh heh!
IF I REMEMBER, YOU WERE CRYING LIKE A BABY WHEN WE FIRST MET
scratch
TOSS
WHOOP-SIE!
IF YOU'RE KEEPING ME BY YOUR SIDE. .
I'LL EVEN LISTEN TO YOU WHINE.
..CAN'T YOU PUT ME TO A LITTLE USE NOW AND THEN?

YOU SOUND LIKE AN OLD GEEZER TALKING ABOUT THE PAST LIKE THAT, CHIARO.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN YOU'RE ONLY TWO YEARS MY ELDER?

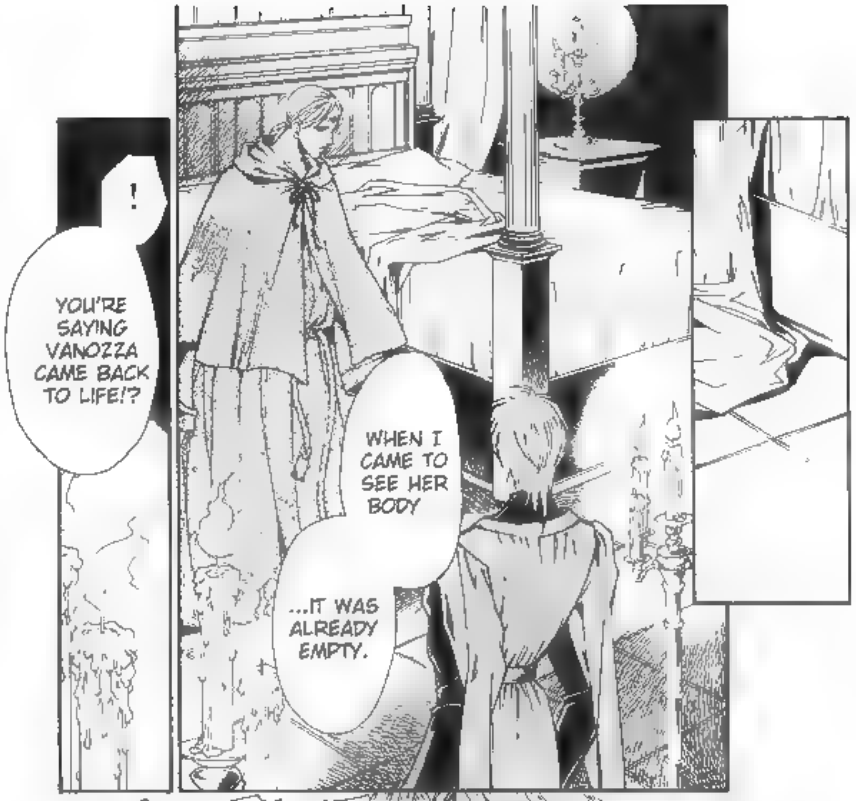
NO MATTER. THERE'S A REASON FOR EVERYTHING I DO
IS THAT HOW YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE, TAGIO?
BUT SIR.
I HAVE ANTICIPATED THAT MAN'S EVERY MOVE.
THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO PUT UP WITH YOUR COMPLAINTS.
YES SIR.
CLIP
CLOP
YOUR AGE SHOWS THROUGH WHENEVER YOU'RE WITH MICHELOTTO.
MIGHT I SUGGEST GOING THROUGH THE VATICAN'S SECRET PASSAGE TO REACH SANTA ANGELO?
SORRY FOR MAKING YOU WAIT
I ONLY JUST ARRIVED.
THE FRENCH ARE EVERYWHERE.
ARE YOU SAYING ...I'M TOO TRUSTWORTHY?
YOU NEED TO BE A CLEVER MANIPULATOR... ...AT ALL TIMES.
IF YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR AMBITIONS ...
...THIS MAY BE A DANGER TO YOU ESPECIALLY DURING SUCH CHAOTIC TIMES.


NEVER-THELESS
...THIS SANTA ANGELO IS A CONSIDERABLY SOLID FORT.
PRINCE
I COULD CARE LESS WHAT HAPPENS TO ME.
JUST LIKE A BIRD-CAGE. .
FROM WITHIN, THE BIRD ALWAYS SEEKS FOR IT. THE WIDE-OPEN SKY, THAT IS.

STRUM
PL--
PLEASE STOP, PRINCE DJEM. THE FRENCH WILL HEAR YOU!
I COULDN'T SLEEP WITH ALL THIS COMMO-TION.
OH. I'M SORRY.
SO PLEASE DON'T WORRY
NO MAT-TER WHAT, WE WILL PROTECT YOU.
THE FRENCH ARMY DEMANDS YOUR PERSONAGE BE BROUGHT TO THEM. WE MOVED YOU TO THIS CASTLE SO THAT WE COULD BETTER GUARD YOU.

WHAT I FEAR IS ABSOLUTE TRUST IN YOU.
IF BY ANY CHANCE THERE COMES A TIME THAT I AM BETRAYED BY YOU...I AM PREPARED TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE.

SO HERE YOU ARE, CHIARO!
!
SOME-THING AWFUL HAS--
CHIA-RO.
WH--
WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW?
!
THATTA GIRL.
SORRY BUT I'M GONNA ASK YOU TO TAKE ME PRETTY FAR.
YOU--!!
Woooooo


!
YOU'RE SAYING VANOZZA CAME BACK TO LIFE!?
WHEN I CAME TO SEE HER BODY
...IT WAS ALREADY EMPTY.

SHE LOOKED JUST LIKE--
WHAT DID THAT. THAT PURE WOMAN BECOME !?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SOME-THING!?
CALM DOWN, CHIARO
IF SOME-THING TOOK REFUGE N IT. .
SO THE BODY IS NO LONGER VANOZZA. IT'S JUST A VESSEL NOW.
VANOZZA WAS DEAD THAT MUCH I AM SURE.
NO

..THAT FACE WAS--
THAT...
A-H-
WHY YOU!
ALL
...OF A SUDDEN A STRANGE CREATURE FLEW RIGHT AT ME.

SHRRP
!
I DO WONDER WHAT THE YOUNG MASTER WOULD DO IF HE KNEW ABOUT IT.
THINGS CERTAINLY HAVE GOTTEN COMPLI-CATED.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT!
DON'T YOU DARE TELL HIM.
IF YOU WISH TO LIVE
I HARDLY NEED WORRY ABOUT A GNAT LIKE YOU.
PHEW
OH, I'M SHAKING.

WHERE THEY DWELL~!
IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHERE THE DEMONS CHOOSE TO DWELL
IN THE SAME WAY THAT CESARE IN WICKEDNESS CAN WEAR THE FACE OF A SAINT
..YOU HAVE DIVINE ABILITIES THAT CAN TURN DEMONIC.
YOU TWO ATTRACT ONE ANOTHER, BECAUSE YOU ARE TWO PARTS OF THE SAME THING
TWO SIDES OF A MIR-ROR.
THE POWER THAT THAT WOMAN CARRIED WITHIN HER IS THE SAME AS YOURS.
A POWER THAT CAN SEAL EVIL
SOME OF THE DEMONS WRITHING IN CESARE MAY HAVE BEEN DRAWN...
...INTO A DIFFERENT BODY, ONE THAT IS NOW DEVOID...
...OF A SOUL.

MY REPORT, HOLY FATHER.
CHARLES VIII'S ARMY HAS BREACHED THE VATICAN.
...AND IS SENDING HIS ARTILLERY SQUAD DOWN THE TEVERE RIVER
THEY CURRENTLY HAVE THEIR MUZZLES POINTED IN THE DIRECTION OF SANTA ANGELO CASTLE.
THERE ARE 36 GATES BETWEEN US.
HE'S FALLING APART
...BUT HE TAKES IT TOO FAR.
DON'T YOU SEE?

CHIARO ...
YOU'RE KEEPING THE TRUTH FROM HIM.
SO THIS REALLY IS FOR HIM AFTER ALL
IT'S NOT ...
...THAT HE'S IMPORTANT TO ME.
IT'S JUST ONE OF MY DUTIES.
UH-HUH ...
HE HASN'T BEEN ACTING NORMAL LATELY.
JUST THIS ONCE
HE'S TOO GOOD AT SUPPRESSING HIS FEELINGS THROUGH SHEER WILLPOWER. THAT MAY BE SEEN AS A VIRTUE IN THIS DARK AGE...
THAT'S THE PROBLEM.
OH?
WELL, HE LOOKS LIKE HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING

YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK.
IN REGARDS TO YOUR OWN SAFETY..
..IT'D BE BEST THAT YOU DON'T LEAVE THIS PLACE.
PLEASE SEND ME TO CHARLES.
I WANT TO SEE FOR MYSELF HOW COMPETENT A KING HE IS.
!

STAB
I ASKED IF YOU'D TASTED FOR POISON
I'M NOT ALLOWED A MOMENT'S PEACE IN THIS PLACE.
THEY SAY THE ITALIANS ARE GENIUSES WHEN IT COMES TO POISONING.
HUH?
DID YOU TASTE FOR POISON?

OOOH!
WHAT A SITUATION!
WHAT!?
WHAT'RE YOU STALLING FOR!? HURRY!!
BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR MY DEPARTURE! I CAN'T STAY HERE A MOMENT LONGER...
BUT YOUR HOLINESS!
STAY CALM... YOUR HOLINESS.

CESARE
THAT RUMOR'S JUST A BLUFF.
CHARLES ISN'T FOOLISH ENOUGH TO EVEN *THINK* OF DESTROYING THE SACRED RELICS INSIDE THIS CASTLE. IT WOULD INVITE DANGEROUS RUMORS ABOUT HIS FAITH.

SHOW ME YOUR FACE.
YOUR MAJESTY.
THAT PEST...
SO HE'S ALIVE!
WHAT!
CESARE HAS COME TO THE PALACE AS AN ENVOY OF THE POPE?
GRR..
OH!
CARDINAL ROVERE!
!?
WHILE HE DESTROYS THE KING'S WILL TO SEIZE NAPLES!
OR INTERFERES WITH MY EFFORTS TO HAVE THE KING CONVICT ALEXANDER OF CORRUPTION!
I CAN'T JUST SIT AND WAIT

WHAT!? I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF EATING! HE'LL HAVE TO WAIT
SIRE, AN ENVOY FROM SANTA ANGELO HAS COME TO SEE YOU...
NOW EAT!
Y-- YES, MAJESTY
MAJESTY. IT'S...
...SIGNORE CESARE BORGIA.
I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT YOU...
WE-- COME.

HMPH...HE'S CERTAINLY BOLD.
WHAT I REQUEST FROM THE POPE IS...
.. THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MY RIGHT TO INHERIT THE THRONE OF NAPLES
AS I AM A NOVICE, I CAN ONLY ASK FOR YOUR GUIDANCE.
HA HA HA!
AN ENVOY MUST BE WORTHY OF THE HEAVY TASK HE CARRIES!
THOUGH I SUPPOSE THAT ISN'T THE CASE WHEN NEPOTISM'S INVOLVED!
THEN YOU STILL HAVE MUCH TO LEARN ABOUT POLITICS, DEAR BOY.
...I WISH TO CONVENE A RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY IN ORDER TO PURGE THE CHURCH OF CORRUPTION.
. AND PERMISSION TO PASS THROUGH THE POPE'S JURISDICTION FOR THE SAKE OF THE CRUSADE. OH, ALSO...
WE'LL HAVE TO DETERMINE THE VALIDITY OF THOSE RUMORS.
FOR SOME REASON THE POPE HAS MANY FOUL RUMORS ABOUT HIM.
...THE GREAT ALEXANDER VI MUST BE JUDGED BY THE ASSEMBLY.
OF COURSE
I MUST DO WHATEVER I CAN TO PREVENT THAT!
IT'LL BE SIMPLE FOR HIM TO PERSUADE THAT IMBECILIC KING.
AT THIS RATE, ALL MY HARD WORK WILL BE UNDONE!
I'M 19.
YOUR MAJESTY.
YOU'RE RATHER YOUNG AT FIRST GLANCE
JUST HOW OLD ARE YOU, CARDINAL BORGIA?
I CANNOT PERMIT YOU TO GO ANY FURTHER.
CARDINAL ROVERE.

DETHRONING HIM, HOWEVER, MIGHT MEAN THE COLLAPSE OF ALL YOUR DREAMS.
HE IS IF HE'S THE SON OF THE POPE.
PLEASE DO AS YOU LIKE.
IF YOU BELIEVE THAT A LOWLY CARDINAL IS VALUABLE ENOUGH.
I'VE HEARD ENOUGH OUT OF YOU.
AS PROOF, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO TAKE YOU HOSTAGE?
!
GRAB

IS NOT YOUR PRIME TARGET THE RESTORATION OF THE ANJOUS AS GOVERNING FAMILY OF NAPLES?
IF SO,
THEN LENDING YOUR EAR TO SIGNORE ROVERE IS THE MOST FOOLISH THING YOU COULD HAVE DONE
HOW--
HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT!
AND NOW I MUST ASK HIS EXCELLENCY...
WHY DO YOU ADVANCE UPON ITALY?
Heh heh.
YOU REALLY HAVE FALLEN RIGHT INTO .
...CARDINAL ROVERE'S TRAP
STEP
YOU SEE ...
AS LONG AS THE POPE IS THE POPE, THOSE PRIVILEGES WILL BE BOUNDLESS.
YOUR PROGRESS TOWARDS THE PRIVILEGES OF NAPLES HAS BEEN SIDETRACKED SIGNIFICANTLY.
BY PUTTING YOUR FAITH IN SUCH A MAN,
WHAT!
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD?
IT'S WELL KNOWN THAT HE IS A FRIEND OF NAPLES.

WHAT IS THE MATTER?
YOU'RE RATHER UPSET
Y-YES.
WE JUST GOT WORD THAT THE POPE AND KING CHARLES VIII HAVE SIGNED A PACT
AND.
PRINCE DJEM!
PRINCE DJEM!
BAM
BAM
AND...?
YOUR HIGHNESS!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?
HOW COULD YOU SUBMIT TO SUCH CONDITIONS?
COME NOW.
YOU'RE GETTING YOUR CASTLE BACK, AFTER ALL.

I AM NO SON OF H.S.
AND IN THE REALM OF POLITICS, I EARN NO PRICE.
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO FAMILIAL LOYALTY?
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT A POPE COULD HAVE A "SON."
THAT THEIR PURITY IS JUST AN ILLUSION.
FOR SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T EXIST...
...WHERE DO THINGS LIKE LOYALTY FIT IN?
YOU AMUSE ME.

NO DOUBT HE WAS INFLU-ENCED BY THAT DREADFUL BOY.
IT'S NO GOOD. HE'S BEEN COMPLETELY HOOKED.
TREMBLE TREMBLE
THIS MUST BE THE SUPREME JOY OF BEING A CHRISTIAN!
I never knew he was that big an idiot.
Haaah...
CESARE BORGIA.
HE MUST BE THE ONE WORKING IN THE SHADOW OF THE POPE.
HE IS OUR TRUMP CARD.
WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT REMAINS CLEAR.
YOUR HIGHNESS, CESARE IS COMING ALONG AS OUR HOSTAGE.

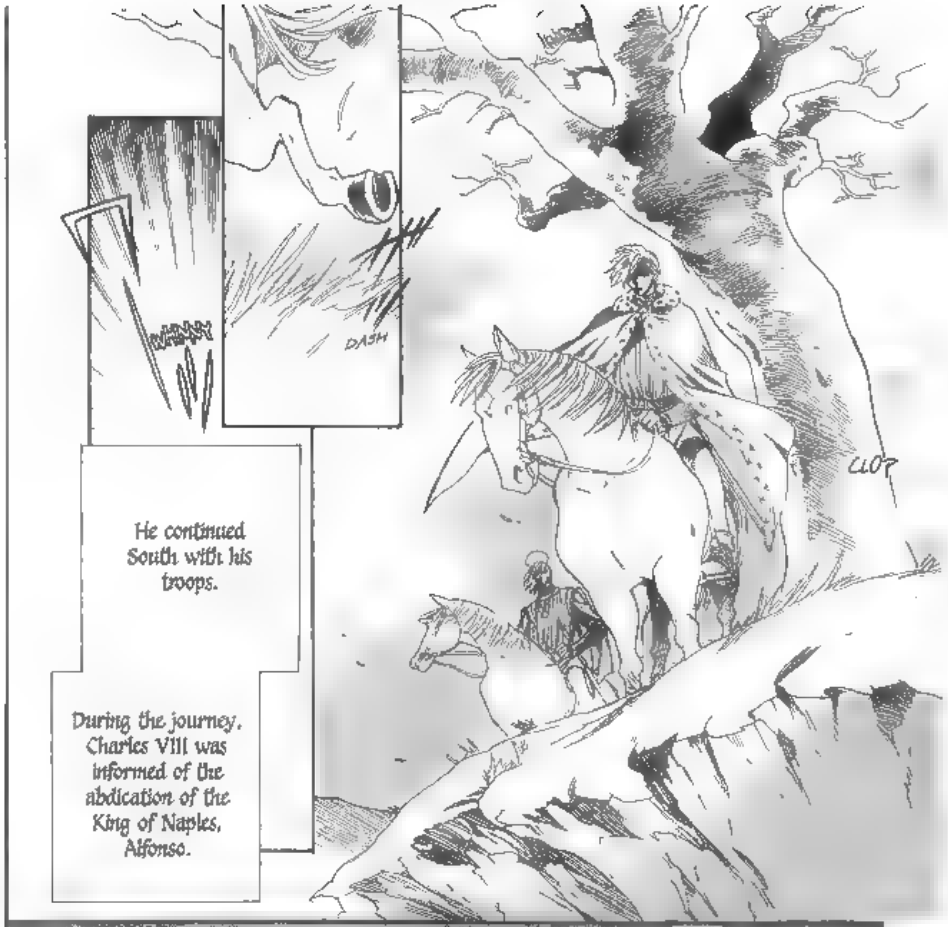
IF YOU GO TO NAPLES, THE ATTAINMENT OF ITS THRONE WILL BE COMPLETELY OUT OF REACH.
THAT SCOUNDREL COMPROMISED EVERYTHING WHEN HE MADE IT SOUND AS THOUGH THAT WAS WHAT MATTERED...! YOU MUSTN'T COMPROMISE ANYTHING!
BESIDES WHICH, I WANT TO PUSH ON TO NAPLES.
I'VE DECIDED TO HANDLE THOSE MATTERS LATER-- NOW THAT I'VE GOT PRINCE DJEM.
EXHAUSTED
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO INCITING THE RELIGIOUS ASSEMBLY!?
AND THE CRUSADES CAMPAIGN..!?
!?
NOW NOW. YOU MUSTN'T SPEAK SO POORLY OF THE POPE.
THE OTHER DAY HE INVITED ME TO THE VATICAN.
WITH THE WORDS OF THE MOST SOLEMN MISSA..
...GREAT ALEXANDER VI GAVE PRAISE TO THE HOLY LIGHT
MASS WAS MAGNIFI-CENT
THE POPE EVEN MET ME IN AN EXTREMELY OFFICIAL PAPAL TRIPLE TIARA!

I LEARNED QUITE A BIT FROM MY LAST EXPERIENCE.
...WAS INEVITABLE.
THAT OUTCOME...
YOU--
YOU WORKED IT OUT SO THAT YOU'D BE TAKEN HOSTAGE!
THIS TIME...
...I'M GOING TO NEED HELP FROM YOU TWO.
TWO?
WAAAH!

IT'S ALL RIGHT.
SHUT
WOULD YOU CLOSE THAT WINDOW?
YOU'LL LET SNOW IN.
SNOW?
OH. I HADN'T NOTICED.
YOU DID IT ON PURPOSE, DIDN'T YOU?
WINTER ALREADY? TIME HAS FLOWN.

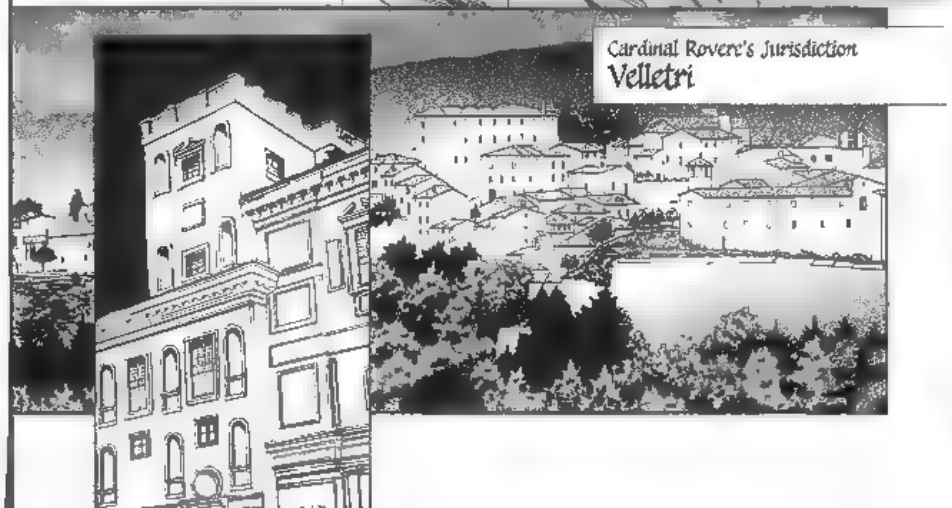
THAT MAN IN THE RED ROBES-- IT'S CARDINAL BORGIA, RIGHT?
SURE SEEMS DOCILE.
heh heh heh
THAT WIMP'LL COLLAPSE LONG BEFORE WE REACH NAPLES.
droop
OH, YOUR HOLINESS, WATCH OUT.

GRR
This is getting complicated
NICE TO MEET YOU AGAIN, MICHELOTTO.
I MEAN, CHIARO.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I ALREADY TOLD HIM ABOUT YOU.
AS YOU KNOW, DELLA VOLPE IS A TRUSTWORTHY RETAINER. YOU TWO WILL BE WORKING TOGETHER A LOT MORE FROM NOW ON.
WHOA.
NOW THIS IS TOO MUCH!
rustle
HEY.
WHAT IS ALL THAT?
EVERYTHING FROM THE BORGIA HOUSEHOLD IS BEING GIVEN AS TRIBUTE TO THE KING.



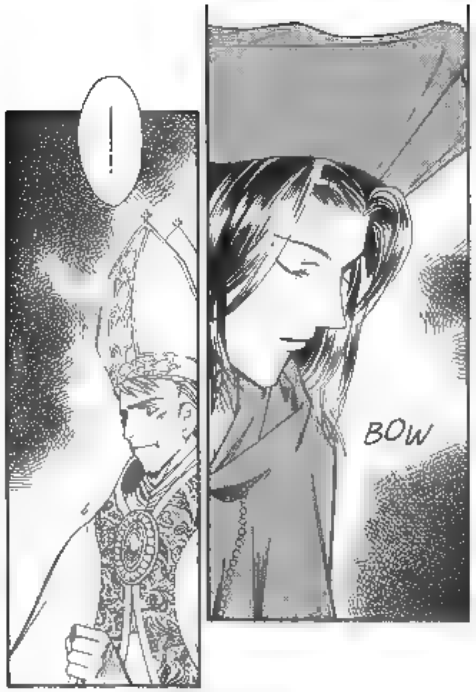
He continued South with his troops.

During the journey, Charles VIII was informed of the abdication of the King of Naples, Alfonso.



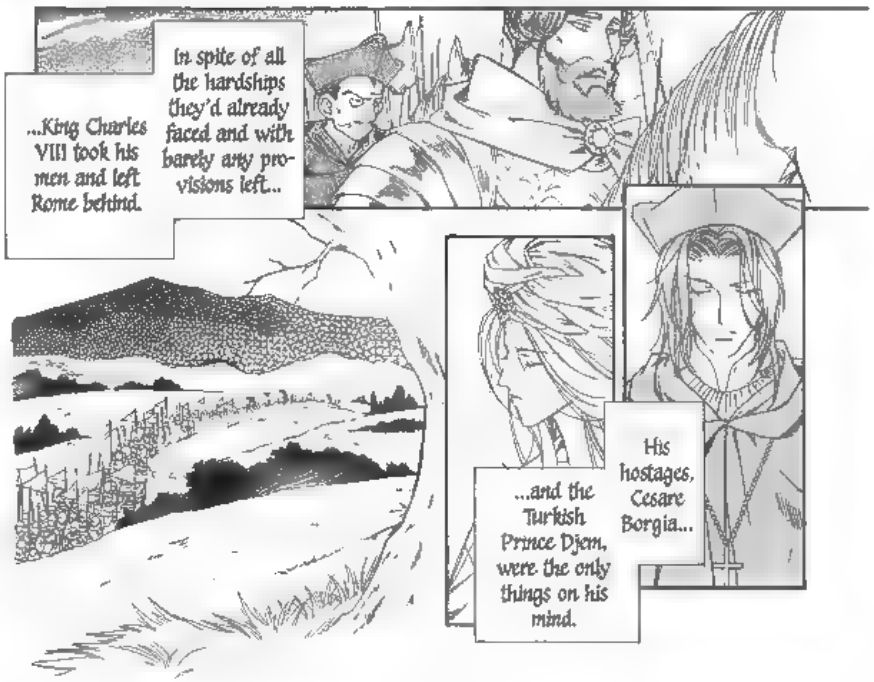
Once again with their eye on the subjugation of Naples, they left Rome.

On January 29th, 1495, the French army of 90,000 strong overshadowed the great plaza of Santa Angelo.



...King Charles VIII took his men and left Rome behind.

In spite of all the hardships they'd already faced and with barely any provisions left...



...and the Turkish Prince Djem, were the only things on his mind.

His hostages, Cesare Borgia...

YOU'RE HERE!
GOOD THING WE'RE STAYING AT THE SAME PALACE!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
CHIA-RO!
YOU LOT HAD BETTER NOT BE CARELESS TONIGHT
IT'S A TURKISH PRINCE WHO WILL BE SPENDING THE NIGHT AT THE PALACE
Ahem
IT'S CARDINAL ROVERE!
STRUM
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?
IT'S SAD SOME-HOW.
IT MUST BE A FOREIGN SONG..
STRUM
OH!
HOWEVER, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A FOOL TO ME.
PRINCE DJEM. OTHERS MAY HAVE FALLEN FOR YOUR CHARISMA...
THAT SOUND
...REALLY WAS YOU AFTER ALL!

...A GREAT HELP TO ME... CHIARO.
YOU REALLY ARE...
HM
TO-NIGHT AT TWO?

PARDON ME, YOUR HIGHNESS
THE LONG TRIP HAS TIRED ME
OH, SIGNORE CESARE. YOU'RE TURN-ING IN FOR THE NIGHT ALREADY?
TONIGHT WE PARTY!
NOW EVERY-ONE, DRINK UP!
He's in high spirits because of the Naples abdication
HAAAA HA HA HA HA!
NOW THIS IS THE LIFE!

CHIARO.
I
TONIGHT AT TWO PLEASE MEET CESARE IN THE BUILDING ACROSS THE WAY.
AFTER THAT, YOU SHOULD HEAD FOR A SMALL TAVERN OUTSIDE OF TOWN.
I CAME TO TEL- YOU THAT CARDINA- CESARE AND I HAVE ARRANGED FOR YOU TO ESCAPE.
EVERY-THING'S IN PLACE.
YOU'LL COME WITH US, WON'T YOU, PRINCE DJEM?
DASH
I HAVE YOUR HORSE READY FOR YOU.
WE'LL MEET UP WITH YOU THERE.

THAT'S NOT THE PROB-LEM.
BUT!
YOU DID GIVE HIM THE CORRECT INSTRUCTIONS, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU'RE RIGHT
IT'S WAY PAST OUR REN-DEZVOUS TIME.
THEY'RE LATE.
CHIA-RO.
I
W-WAIT!
I'... GO TOO!
TAGIO!
I'M GOING TO SEE WHAT'S THE MAT-TER!
THUMP
THUMP
NO. NOT HIM!
PRINCE DJEM, YOU WOULDN'T...

SIGNORE CESARE.
DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?
I WOULD LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU.
WHOOOOOO

IT'S ALL RIGHT. IT WASN'T POISON.
HE'S JUST ASLEEP. IN A DEEP, DEEP SLEEP.
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL SLEEPING FACE.
JUST LIKE AN INNOCENT CHILD
WELL ?
DON'T YOU THINK SO. .
...CHIARO ?

IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM, IT'LL BE ALL MY FAULT...!
PLEASE WAIT HERE!
THERE'S STILL A CHANCE I MIGHT PASS HIM ON THE WAY!
VERY WELL!
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO HIM...

THE FRENCH KING WILL USE ME TO FUND HIS CRUSADES CAMPAIGN. I WILL BE SAFER UNDER THE PROTECTION OF THE FRENCH ARMY THAN OUT WHERE OTHERS CAN FIND ME.
AND AS LONG AS CESARE IS A HOSTAGE OF THE FRENCH, THERE'S NO WAY ROME WILL ISSUE A COUNTER-ATTACK.
CESARE'S CRUCIAL POSITION AS THE POPE'S BRAIN MAKES HIM A VALUABLE HOSTAGE.
WHY?
WHAT WILL YOU GET FROM FOILING YOUR OWN CHANCE AT ESCAPE?
DON'T YOU SEE MY BLADE?
PUT DOWN YOUR SWORD.
I HEARD A RUMOR THAT MY BROTHER IN TURKEY HAS COMMISSIONED MY ASSASSINATION FOR A SIGNIFICANT SUM.
SUCH A VAST FORTUNE COULD EASILY SEDUCE A POPE WHO HAS JUST BEEN STRIPPED OF HIS RICHES. THE ONLY THING I CAN OFFER AGAINST THAT...
...IS THE CHARM OF A BEAUTIFUL BODY.
!
WH-WHAT A CORRUPT MONSTER YOU ARE!

I MAY BE IN A CAGE...
...BUT I ALSO HAVE AN EXTENSIVE INFORMATION NETWORK. INVESTIGATING YOU WAS RATHER SIMPLE.
HOW DID YOU...
I MEAN..
...ASSASSIN MICHELOTTO.
SHING
YOU MEAN..
...SINCE THE START--!?

WHUMP
I...
...AM NOT AFFECTED BY SUCH SUBSTANCES.
CESARE!
SHALL I...
...GRANT YOU YOUR WISH?
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE THAT YOU CRAVE MORE
I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES.
SO ALL YOU DO IS INVITE DEATH TO YOU!
YOUR PRIDE WON'T ALLOW YOU TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

SO..?
YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE LOWERING HIS SWORD, PRINCE!
I SWEAR I'LL EXTINGUISH YOU BEFORE YOU LAY A HAND ON CESARE.
SO--!
YES...
THAT'S YOUR WISH DEEP DOWN, ISN'T IT?
lift
SIGNORE CESARE!
BUT THE DRUG--
PRINCE...
I WILL NOT ALLOW YOU TO INVOLVE HIM IN THIS!

!
STAY BACK, CHIARO.
WHAT IS THIS INDESCRIBABLY SWEET SMELL?
GOLDEN EYES!
JUST WHAT ...ARE YOU?
IT'LL WORK MUCH BETTER THAN ANY ORDINARY POISON.
THIS BLOOD IS A NOSTRUM THAT WILL TAKE YOU TO A PLACE FREE FROM SUFFERING.

CESARE, WHAT'RE YOU--!
PLIP
!?

I'VE HAD ENOUGH ...
...OF MY BODY BEING A SEED FOR EVI..
BUT...
LISTEN
EVEN AFTER ALL THAT HAPPENED, I STILL LOVED MY BROTHER.
MY ANGEL OF DEATH.
SO YOU ARE...
...THE ONE I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR ALL THIS TIME...
AA... AAAH ...
!
IF DEATH IS SUCH A SWEET PROSPECT TO YOU...
...THEN DEPART WITH THIS LAST INTOXICATION.

I CAN'T ACCEPT... THAT DEATH IS SOMETHING SWEET.
I DON'T FEEL WELL. CAN I REST FOR A MOMENT?
OH SURE.
WHOOOO
DEEP INSIDE ..
MY BITTER HEART
I...
WHISH
BOY HE'S TAKING A WHILE.

CESA--
WHOA!
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I CLEANSE MYSELF
THE ROTTEN STINK OF THE BLOOD THAT COURSES THROUGH ME STILL SEETHES OUT OF ME
I CAN'T RUB IT OUT.
IT'S MAKING ME SICK.
NOT YET
I CAN'T GET RID OF THE STENCH OF THAT DEMON.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING!?
YOU WANNA FREEZE TO DEATH?
SPLASH
CESARE!
WHERE ARE YOU?
CESARE!
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH
SPLASH

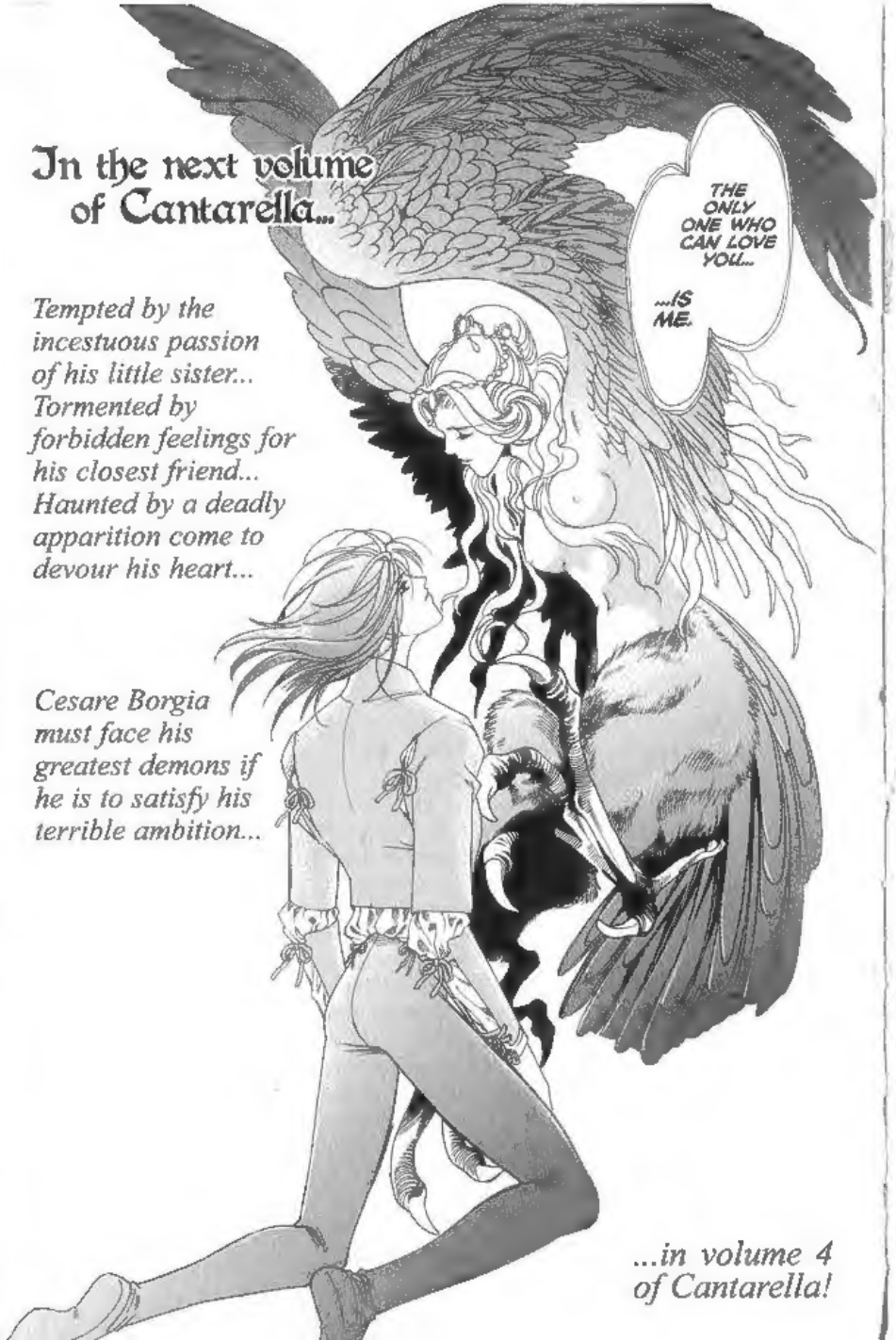
WH--
WHAT'RE YOU!?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'LL FREEZE TO DEATH, CHIARO!
THEN GET OUT OF THE WATER.
AS LONG AS YOU STAY IN HERE, SO WILL I
!
IF YOU HADN'T TREMBLED ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, I'D HAVE KILLED YOU THEN!
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE...
.. STAINED WITH BLOOD!

I DON'T INTEND TO FREEZE HERE.
IT'S JUST THAT MY BODY BURNS UP THINKING ABOUT ALL OF IT.
ALL THE BODIES OF THE MANY LIVES I'VE TAKEN...
FLESH AND BLOOD... CORPSES... SCENES THAT APPEAR IN MY DREAMS.
OR...
PLEA-SURE?
IS IT ANGER ?
SAD-NESS?
!
KERSPLASH

In the next volume of Cantarella...

Tempted by the incestuous passion of his little sister... Tormented by forbidden feelings for his closest friend... Haunted by a deadly apparition come to devour his heart...

Cesare Borgia must face his greatest demons if he is to satisfy his terrible ambition...



...in volume 4 of Cantarella!

TO BE CONTINUED IN CANTARELLA VOL. 4

Before I knew what I was doing, I'd drawn my own emotions into Cesare -- and the sudden realization that I'd exposed myself like that turned me as blushing red as his robes. I'm afraid your Higuri tends to do that with her male characters. And then when I get to the female characters, it feels like I'm dragging my feet. I wonder why? I feel I have many flaws as a creator, but I hope you as my readers will continue to watch over me.

I was thinking that if I had time for it in my Afterword, I'd include some simplified explanation of the history of this period. It looks like I won't be able to do it this time around. Maybe I'll do it in the next volume. Do you think it needs one? A little history lesson, I mean. If you guys come up with any other good ideas, please send them to me! I'll be waiting!

I received a lot of help in the creation of this manga. Thank you Akari Izumi, Naoko Naktsuji, Makoto Hondo, Kaoru Matsuri, Wasao Miyakoshi, Mitsuru Fuyutsuki, Kenkichi Takanashi, Kinoko-san, Junko Fukashi, Mikiko Iwahashi, Kyoko Akimura, Yuki Mizutani, Kuro Takedamaru, Atsushi Umikyo, and Chief Assistant Ryoka Oda. From the bottom of my heart -- thank you.

I'm thinking about you, I-bashi-san and Y-yama-san... I'm going to be a good girl from now on, so please don't abandon me. (heart) hee hee (heart)

To the printing press and Akita Shoten too, and to all of you who purchased this book, my most sincere appreciation! The next volume will also be a tempest of a creation! To the best of us all in the future!!

February 2002
You Higuri

I'll be waiting for your letters:

You Higuri
c/o Audry Taylor
Go! Media Entertainment, LLC
5737 Kanan Rd. #591
Agoura Hills CA 91301

Or visit her official website in English at:
http://www.youhiguri.com

Post Script

I am fascinated by Italian history. No matter how much I research it, I just can't get enough. Especially when it comes to the chaos and confusion of the Renaissance period (an age fraught with civil war). During this period, each region bore forth its own geniuses, heroes, powerful families, and champions. A tumultuous time, indeed! As of yet, I have not been able to grasp how it all came to be this way.

I did my best to structure the story in a way that would make it comprehensible even to those readers who don't like history. I'm sure there are still some parts that are inevitably confusing. Doubtless there will be people who think, "Dang, this series is tiring!" I'm hoping they'll also think, "Hot damn, that Cesare's one helluva thinker!" I promise that amidst all the historical mayhem, I'll make sure the contorted love triangle between Michelotto, Lucrezia and Cesare continues to bend and twist for as long as I can possibly torture them with it.

Anyway, I'm running out of reference materials. I really need to fly to Italy and take some photos, but I just don't have the time! I've been so busy it's making my head spin so much I feel like I could faint. It's all stuff I love to do, but I'm beginning to feel like I'd like a life with at least a little bit of free time. I'm really in a spot. I'm nothing but trouble for my editors. Just thinking about this depresses me, so I'm going to make an effort to be more positive. I've begun to realize that the work one crafts as a writer can influence one's emotional state.

Cardinal Rodrigo, and by the time Lucrezia was born, della Croce and Vanozza had relocated to the grand Piazza Pizzo di Merlo. Perhaps the most important feature of this estate was its close proximity to the marvelous palace that the Cardinal used as his personal residence.

Foreseeing the inevitable fading of the Cardinal's romantic feelings for her, Vanozza secured her future by investing the money he gave her. When they split up around 1482, she became the wealthy owner of three hotels in the most fashionable sections of Rome -- including the famous Campo dei Fiori market, which still thrives to this day. If you walk down the market street called Vicolo del Gallo (on which Cesare and Lucrezia most likely rode when visiting their beloved mother), you will find a stone plaque above house number 13, which was placed there by Vanozza herself. This plaque is divided into 4 parts: the upper right section symbolizes the Catanei family; the upper left and the lower right sections bear the crests of the Borgia family; and the final section bears the crest of Vanozza's final husband, Carlo Canale.

The events that occur in this volume of Higuri-Sensei's *Cantarella* are mostly fictional -- but it is true that during the French invasion of Rome, Vanozza's house was utterly ransacked by enemy forces. She, however, lived to tell the tale at many a rousing party afterwards.

On 14 June, 1497, Vanozza held a *festa* for her beloved children, as she was still on good terms with her ex-lover Rodrigo, now Pope Alexander VI. Cesare and Juan were both in attendance, and left the party together at a rather late hour. To discuss what happened that black night in the alleyways of Rome would be to despoil future events in *Cantarella*. Let us just say that in both the factual version and the fantastical one the appalling horror must have been far greater than any mother could possibly bear.

As for the death of the real Vanozza...hers was a peaceful, quiet end at the age of 76. Vanozza's remains were entombed inside Santa Maria del Popolo, and gradually came to be surrounded by master artworks from later decades, including works by Raphael, Pinturicchio, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. More than 150 years after her passing, the monks there were still saying masses for her soul.

The Borgia family bore bitter enemies through long centuries, and the plaque on Vanozza's tomb bearing a loving inscription of all the names of her children was eventually vandalized by one of these enemies. As a result, her tomb had to be relocated to the Church of San Marco, in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome.

The Life and Death of a Pope's Mistress

Photo: George Mastellone

A mysterious figure greets those who enter Santa Maria del Popolo, the original resting place of Vanozza dei Catanei's remains.

Vanozza dei Catanei -- one of the most tragic figures in *Cantarella*. (Speaking of which, if you haven't finished reading this volume, you might not want to read this extra feature yet!) But what of the real Vanozza, who loved and suffered five hundred years ago? Was her end as heart-rending as the one in You Higuri's gripping epic?

Born in 1442, Vanozza dei Catanei could hardly have anticipated that she would become the mother and mistress of several of the most infamous characters in Italian history. She was living in near-poverty with her first husband, a respectable lawyer named Domenico da Rignano, when she met the notorious womanizer Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia. They hit it off and a few months later when her husband died, Vanozza found herself moving to a respectable home at 58 Via Pellegrino, where she soon gave birth to Cesare Borgia.

Via del Pellegrino (which translates as Pilgrim Street) was a street from early medieval days that connected the Porticus of Octavia with the Ponte Sant'Angelo -- a very familiar name in the history of Borgia family. Still in existence today as an arts & books shopping district, the facades of several buildings on the street hark from the 16th century.

Vanozza's second husband, Giorgio della Croce, was as content as her first husband had been to share his wife (rather profitably) with

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